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BY

THEO. GIFT

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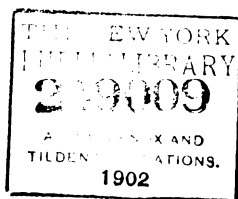


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PRETTY MISS BELLEW.

CHAPTER I.

THE SCHOOLROOM AT NO. 15.

AN uncommonly wet evening! Not so much rain as fog and drizzle—London fog and London drizzle. In the atmosphere, a dim whitish blur, broken here and there by smears of red, where the gas-lamps were beginning to twinkle through the murky air. In the square, drops of moisture distilling with a dreary trickle from every twig and bud and bough. At the corner, a policeman dimly revealed by the shine of his oilskin cape under the gas-lamp. Hidden somewhere in the fog in front of a neighboring house, an organ grinding away dismally at that sweetest and most mangled of all sweet and mangled waltzes—"Il Bacio." Further still, and deeper in the fog and mud, a street-singer quavering shrilly among the top notes of one of the Christy Minstrel melodies. "Fair, fair, with golden hair," came faintly over the swaying trees and thickening darkness—"Fair, fair, with golden hair, sang a lone mother while weeping."

The "lone mother's" voice had a gincracked quaver, an asthmatic wheeze, which irritated the footman at No. 4. He even meditated a sally for the purpose of giving

chase to the nuisance, but his hair was just freshly powdered for dinner, and London fogs are surcharged with sooty particles which *stick*, and so he restrained his war-like desires, and submitted to the annoyance.

It was not audible enough to be disagreeable at No. 15, on the other side of the square, the house whose lighted drawing-room windows threw a flickering, weirdly yellow glare over the dank grass plots and blackened shrubs across the pavement. It was only firelight within, or else the blinds had been down; but it sparkled and danced right merrily on pale green walls and bright mirrors, on pictures, and photographs, and old china; on gipsy tables, rich in home-made point-lace, and big furry rugs, cunningly obscuring the worn patches on the Turkey carpet; on curtains of ruby damask, which looked quite new and brilliant in the ruddy light, and curtains of white lace hiding their darned parts in graceful folds; last, not least, on the back view of a young lady gazing through the blurred and misty panes, as if in a vain effort to make out the "lone mother" afore-mentioned.

"*Hateful* weather!" said Kate. "Vile, hateful weather! Oh! how damp and cold they will be!"

She came out into the firelight as she spoke, a girl of nineteen or thereabouts, with a quantity of wavy, bronze-colored hair knotted up on the top of her head; with round, well-opened brown eyes, and nose fine at the bridge, and square at the tip; with red, sharply curved lips, always apart, and a determined little chin cleft in two, like a white-heart cherry; with cheeks flushed with health, and dented by two infantine dimples; and arms and throat white as milk, and round and soft as a yearling babe's: a girl whose first appearance gave you an overpowering sense of *life*—life pure and healthy, and vigorous as a young forest tree; whose voice had a sort of jubilant defiance in its fresh young tones, and whose laugh rang out with the clear, joyous vibration of a peal of wedding bells: a girl who might have stood for Canova's Hebe, and whose appetite was as healthy as her mind.

The firelight seemed to like her, it hung about the

ripening curves of her young, round figure so lovingly, and kissed with a warm, tender glow the shapely, cream-white hands stretched out to meet it—the saucy, honest face bent down above it.

“Five o’clock,” said Kate, looking from the vaguely flickering reflections of herself in the mirror over the fireplace, to the old-fashioned Dresden clock on the chimney-piece; “five o’clock—and they won’t be here for another hour. I think I’ll get some tea.”

She was rather fond of talking to herself when there was no one else to talk to, preferring singing, or even soliloquy, to the alternative of silence. As her light feet went tripping down the broad, shallow stairs, and across the hall, with its chessboard-like surface of black and white marble, she was humming the refrain of “John Brown’s Body” in so joyous a key, that three younger sets of lungs in the schoolroom took it up, and greeted her with a chorus as she entered, laughing.

“My dears, pray!” cried Miss Smith, from her seat behind the tea-tray. “Eva, you too! Good evening, Miss Bellew. Shall I give you some tea?”

“Goodness gracious, Kittie, how swell you are! and what have you dressed so early for?” broke in Madge (No. 3, and *at* twelve), springing up from her chair, and jerking half the contents of her tea-cup over the cloth, in her hurry to inspect Kate’s attire. Poor Miss Smith uttered a second remonstrance, and Eve (No. 2, and *at* fifteen) ably seconded her. [N. B.—Some of the tea had gone over her dress.]

“I never knew any one so rough and vulgar as Madge,” she observed, in an icy little tone of disgust, which quite extinguished the governess’s patient “Madge! Madge!”

Madge paid little attention to either. Bigger than Eve already, and at that clumsy age when the unshaped female form goes in where it ought to come out, and comes out where it ought to go in, she had planted a hand on either side of Kate’s waist, and twisted her round for a better contemplation of the crisp white muslin and carnation-colored bows, which harmonized so well with the wearer’s lips and cheeks.

"Isn't she a swell, just?" cried Madge, who delighted to use slang for the mere pleasure of seeing Eve's lips tighten shudderingly; but she got no second rebuke, Eve merely asking as she handed her sister a cup of tea:

"Why are you dressed so early, Kate?"

"Because I got tired of doing nothing," said Kate, laughing, and extricating herself from Madge's grasp to sit down in the well worn armchair by the fire, and put her feet on the fender. "I never can do anything when I am expecting Dick home; and I thought dressing would pass the time away as well as anything else."

"And is all that 'goffring' and finery for Dick?" asked Eve, with a natural sourness emanating from the maternal warning earlier in the day that she would dine with the three juveniles that evening, "company" being expected.

"Dick, indeed!" broke in Master George, a stout, bullet-headed urchin of ten, looking up from the plate of bread and marmalade he was discussing. "Dick! She don't dress for *him*. Don't you know there are lawyers and people coming?"

"Ah! I had forgotten the new lawyer," said Eve, drily. "So the red bows are for him, Kate? Well, when I am out, I will wait to see what manner of fish are in the stream before I dress my flies for them."

"Is you going to catch fiss, Katie?" said little Dottie, turning up her innocent face, with wide, brown eyes wonderfully like Kate's, from her corner under Miss Smith's wing. "Will oo take me? I's be welly good, and carry ze bastet so nicely."

"Kate likes to capture all the fish," said Madge, bursting out laughing. "She doesn't want to keep them—do you, Kittie? You'll throw them all back into the water for Eve afterwards."

"Of course I do," said Kate, turning her bright face round, "and of course my bows are for the new lawyer. I am trembling now lest Dick should hug all the starch out of my frills before his friend sees them. I want him to like me. And why not? Every one does generally; *why shouldn't he?*"

"How do you know they do?" asked Eve, satirically.

"By their ways and manners, of course. Don't you know when people like you?"

"Nobody ever does," observed George, carefully removing some superfluous marmalade from his cheek with the end of his tongue; "she's too disagreeable."

"Master George," said the governess, "that is not the way to talk of your sister."

"I am used to it," said Eve, with dignity; "and I must say I should try to make people like me by what I was, rather than by what I had on."

"People like Kate without her trying," put in Madge, warmly. "I heard Mrs. Fisher telling mamma that she was the very nicestest girl at the last ball; and you know Mr. Luscott fell in love with her the—"

"Madge, my dear!" cried Miss Smith, shocked. "What do you know of falling in—ahem! No one is talking of such a thing."

"Certainly not," said Eve. "I don't think there is much love in what Kate calls her flirtations."

"Eve!" said Miss Smith, reprovably.

"I only *call* it flirting," cried Kate, reddening warmly, "because if I didn't, nasty people would. They always do say a girl is flirting if she is cheerful, and makes no humbug about liking to talk to pleasant people, and liking pleasant people to talk to her, and care for her, and—"

"Well, you need not get so red and hot over it," observed Eve. "You may call it flirting, or not flirting. Anyhow, I don't agree with it; and I don't think you've any right to call people humbogs who—"

"My dear Eve," said Miss Smith, "do you know what flirting means? Miss Bellew was only joking; no well-bred young lady would think of such a thing."

"Is me a well-bwed lady?" said little Dottie, anxiously. "My hands always unner de table."

"You're a darling duck," said Kate, pouncing on and kissing her, "and the sweetest little lady out, that you are. I say, youngsters, what's the matter with Eve, that she's so cross this evening? Has she been greedy, and eaten up that pot of Devonshire cream that turned sour yesterday?"

Madge was busy maintaining a silent scuffle with George for the possession of a particularly crumby piece of bread. She turned round now with a mischievous laugh; and George instantly seized the bone of contention, and stuffed one-third of it into his mouth, to make "assurance doubly sure."

"Cream? No, Kittie; she's been eating a dish of herbs in the schoolroom, and hatred withal, instead of going into the stalled ox and what-you-may-call-ems in the dining-room! That's what's the matter with her."

"As if I cared about such a trifle!" Eve answered, loftily, with a toss of her smooth little flaxen head. "It only shows Dick's love of his family, that he would rather see any one else on the first day of his coming home from college."

"Dick *does* love his family," cried Kate, flushing up again. "Dick is a darling. Of course he likes us to ask one or two people to meet Mr. Clive. When a man brings his greatest friend home, it's only natural he should wish to do him a little honor; and you *know* the table only holds six cosily. It is very unkind of you to say anything against Dick, Eva."

"Oh, never mind Eva, Kittie," broke in Madge, pushing away her cup and plate. "Tell us what the 'stalled ox' is to-day. We all smelt duck quite plainly; but it was mixed up with something else—I said pastry, but George thought it was bacon, and that means fowls of course. We've got a bet on it. Which has won?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," said Kate, with that happy ignorance of all culinary and housekeeping matters so natural in our young English matrons to be. "I suppose I shall see when I sit down to it. Smell a little harder as it comes upstairs, George, and perhaps you'll find out."

"Sall I help you smell, Georgie?" asked Dottie, inflating her little nostrils in readiness. "I tan smell twite hard—tan't I, Miss Smiff?"

"Little girls never smell," said Miss Smith, primly; "it is not good man— Madge, my dear!"—as Madge sent her chair over backwards in her hurry to get to Kate.

"I *didn't* do it on purpose, Miss Smith. Do wait one

moment, Kittie. I want to know if Mr. Clive is a relation or not. Eve says he is."

"Oh dear, no—at least, only by courtesy. He's—let me see—a step-son of one of papa's second or third cousins. That is no relation to us, you know; but I believe Dick and he call cousins, and so I suppose we shall do the same. Dick wants him to feel quite at home here."

"A man and a brother," said George, pushing away the marmalade dish with a deep sigh—whether the result of repletion, or the melancholy courtesy of leaving the last and very least portion of that delicacy unappropriated, is not known. "I hope he'll be a jolly sort of fellow, who'll take us out, and stand Madame Tussaud, and that sort of thing. Dick never does."

"Dick hasn't time," said Kate, wincing visibly at any word against her elder brother. "Miss Smith can tell you grown-up men have too many friends and engagements to be always taking their family about. Now, then, what next?"—as George stayed her exit a second time by jumping up and putting his back against the door.

"Stoop, Kittie;" (in an ingratiating whisper) "promise to bring me something from the dessert; not just a biscuit, like last time, but something nice."

"And bwing me somesing nice too, Kittie," put in Dottie, clinging with her fat hands to Kate's sash. The elder girl stooped down, and kissed her, laughingly.

"You little wretches—a likely story! Why, I brought you those biscuits at the risk of disgracing myself for ever and ever; and then I had on a silk dress with a pocket 'convenient.' Fancy Mr. Clive seeing a handful of figs and raisins transparently visible through this!"—holding out her cloudy skirts with a merry laugh. "Move out of the way, Georgie—Gorgy!"

"You could smuggle it in your handkerchief, Kate. Just a peach?"

"A peach! when they cost a mint—at this season, too! What next? Good night, Dottie dumpling. Now, George, let me go."

"Oh, very well. I'm off parole, then, that's all."

"Oh, George!" (from Madge) "you mean, greedy thing!"

"Greedy yourself, Madge. You know you always got the biggest share."

[N. B.—Some little while back, the exit of the gentlemen from the dining-room had been, I grieve to say, the signal for a raid on the dessert, of which Tom, the page-boy, had proved an inefficient defender. George had, in consequence, been put on honor by his mother not to continue these enterprises, the fruits of which were shared with Madge, who also came in for her share of blame.]

"Not when I'm on parole, George."

"Yes; but mamma said when we were, we should have something nice next day."

"Well, wait till dinner to-morrow, and you'll have something."

"I don't like waiting. I—"

"Master George, *is* this proper, gentlemanly behavior?—Really, Madge, I wish—"

"I'm not doing anything, Miss Smith. It's George won't let Katie go. Katie, make mamma come up from dinner quick. Eve and I want to see what Mr. Clive is like."

"I can't, Madge. Mrs. Marryatt always sits so long over her wine."

"Put a pin in her chair."

"Put some vinegar in her wine."

"Oh, dear! are the Marryatts coming? That horrid man! I do hate him so."

"Because he will pat your cheeks. So!"

"Well, George, would you like to be patted like a prize pig?"

"Perhaps he thinks you're like one."

"I'm not nearly as stout as you."

"Yes, you are; look at your legs."

"Don't be rude, sir. You burst a button off your waistcoat at dinner on Friday."

"It wasn't at dinner; it was turning a wheel."

"OH, what a cram!"

"My dear Madge, I—"

"Oh! hush, please—I beg your pardon" (from Kate)—what in the name of goodness is that?"

That was a man's voice from the drawing-room floor—a familiar voice, too, calling out:

"Halloa! Katie! Somebody! Is no one at home?"

"It's DICK!" cried Kate, in an agony—"Oh!!" and hurled herself at the door, scattering George, and rushing upstairs like a white whirlwind.

In the noisy babel of the schoolroom, no one had heard either the expected knock at the door or the voices in the hall; and Kate, who had meant to be waiting ready to seize on her brother and welcome his friend in the very moment of their arrival, was utterly taken aback by the shock of hearing them above.

Forgetting altogether the graceful little greeting she had prepared for Dick's hero in the overwhelming delight of Dick's presence, she tore upstairs, stumbling over her white flounces in her haste, and flung her arms round the first of two dark figures dimly visible against the firelight background of the drawing-room doorway.

CHAPTER II.

"I THINK HIM A PIG."

FORTUNATELY it *was* Dick. I don't think people often make mistakes of that sort off the stage. Besides, Dick's head was flaxen, and stood two inches lower than his friend's. He reddened slightly in the darkness when half choked by two warm white arms, while an impetuous voice stammered out, "Oh, Dick, dear! to think of our not hearing you come! And I *was* watching for you. Oh, I'm so glad you're here; and—oh, dear! *how* your moustache has grown!"

She had quite forgotten the stranger, you see; and I think—I'm not sure—that Dick remembered him more than he did his pleasure at being so warmly welcomed. Anyway, he resisted the cowardly feeling, and kissed his sister with a sort of defiance as he said:

"Why, Katie, you'll eat me up. Here's my friend Clive. Haven't you a word for him as well?"

Of course Kate had a word; only she had but just remembered his existence. Letting go of Dick with a sort of feeling that she had "gushed," and yet with a happy confidence that even gushing, in this undemonstrative age, was pardonable when she was the gusher, and Dick the subject, she turned with a ready mingling of smile and color to the visitor; and saw, by the glimmer of firelight—what she never had seen before in any face of man when turned in her direction—a sneer!

It was very slight, so slight and faint indeed as to be hardly distinguishable even in a brighter light, save by a

very quick-witted person. Unfortunately Miss Bellew was very quick-witted. She distinguished it at once, and in one and the same moment hated Mr. Bernard Clive with a fierce and deadly hatred, which manifested itself in an immediate straightening of all the Hebe curves in her lithe young figure, and the frigid bend of her head, as with face "darkly, deeply, beautifully red," she pronounced the formal greeting:

"We are very happy to see you, Mr. Clive. I beg your pardon for not noticing you at first."

Dick was disappointed. He knew Kate to the core, and was well acquainted with her two forms of manner, the outspokenly cordial and outspokenly sharp. Naturally, he thought the former had been bespoken for his friend, and felt aggrieved at this chill politeness.

"Let us come into the drawing-room. Isn't my mother at home? and are there no lights in the house?" he said, sharply, drowning something Clive was saying about needing "an apology for intruding on domestic reunions"—something which sounded like an appendix to the sneer, Kate thought. She was quite unconscious how bewitching the angry flush made her, as reaching up one hand to light the centre lamp, she let the pure mellow light stream down on dimpling cheek and gold bronzed hair; and all the soft white curves of arm and dress relieved against a dark green background of dainty, fragile drawing-room ferns. Dick, who had not seen her for some time, and who was rather impressionable on the score of feminine charms, felt his vexation fade away in honest pride at the possession of such a pretty sister, and at being able to exhibit her to his critical third cousin by compliment.

Dick was not a very wise young man, and had not much to be proud of on his own account. Painfully slight, with flaxen hair like Eve's, and light blue eyes, which looked dark by reason of an unhealthy purplish shade round them, he made the most striking contrast to his favorite sister that could well be found. He was only twenty-one, and yet there were little crows'-feet at the corners of his eyes, and little lines on his forehead, and more

lines about his mouth : small unholy signatures that gave him an old, worn look, which went oddly with his fair hair and soft moustache. He was old, poor Dick! almost worn out and used up before he had gained his majority. He had run through life so quickly as, like that babe in the ballads, to be "elderly, elderly too," at the age when most young men are almost boys; and you could see it in the slight stoop he had when "off guard," and in the nervous movements of his slight thin hands, as well as in those tell-tale lines—lines which had graven answering ones, deep and broad, across his mother's brow.

I am afraid he was no great comfort to that lady, although he was her first-born, and had been her idol. She had adored him, and flattered him, and spoiled him in every way since his boyhood; and yet he had not turned out either self-denying, well-conducted, or energetic. I doubt if he was even grateful; spoiled children seldom are. On the contrary, he had been expelled from school, and almost driven into college; had learned nothing, and spent heaps of money; and was now home in disgrace, rusticated for a year in consequence of some scrape worse than ordinary—some scrape so bad that only the vaguest rumors of it had reached Lady Margaret and her confidante. And yet when the culprit signified that he was bringing with him a distant connection who *had* distinguished himself at college, and at thirty years of age had made a name at the bar, and returned to Alma Mater to take a fellowship—and had ordered that a room should be got ready for this hero, and certain guests, legal and otherwise, invited to meet him—his mother and sister never dreamed of disobeying, but were, on the contrary, rather gratified at knowing a means for insuring their idol being in a good temper on his return. He had come home in disgrace once before, and had been in a bad temper. Lady Margaret and Kate remembered that first evening painfully.

Of course they never dreamed of resenting his humors. Women, womanly women, that is, seldom do. When he offended his great-uncle, Lord Lovegoats, by declining that living, for the adorning of which his noble relative

had allowed a hundred a year towards college expenses, and had curtly refused to go into the Church at all, or do anything unconnected with a red coat, Lady Margaret had almost gone down on her knees to coax her uncle into continuing the young reprobate's allowance, and keeping the living open for Tom, who was now at Rugby; and Kate made vigorous (but ineffectual) love to an old general in the neighborhood, to induce him to use his interest for getting her brother a commission in the Blues. And ever after Mrs. de Ponsonby spoke of her as "that fast Miss Bellew, who quite shocked the general by her way of going on."

Some people thought Eve would turn out a nicer girl, "more soft and feminine;" but Kate was quite unaware of these strictures, and had a happy way of believing in every one's good disposition to herself, until startled by some overt proof to the contrary, such as Mr. Clive's sneer. She did not often come across one.

Lady Margaret was in the room by this time, had shaken hands with Clive, welcoming him in a few cordial words—just what Kate had meant to say—and had kissed her son affectionately, but with a sort of *arrière pensée* as to the reason of his being at home at all at that time. She loved him so dearly, this black sheep of hers, and yet he was so black! Why had he not kept to his books and consented to the Church? He would have been provided for then; and George would have been at school instead of dawdling on with Miss Smith. It was all very well for Kate to say, "Dick is not fitted for the Church, mamma"—and he certainly was not—but, as Lady Margaret said, "How many go into the Church without being fitted for it, and yet get on very well! And Guttlesbury-in-the-Marshes is such a nice, quiet village, he couldn't have done anything very outrageous there."

I am afraid, Lady Margaret, that the quietness of Guttlesbury-in-the-Marshes was one reason against it in Dick's eyes. Lady Margaret thought the same, as did Kate in her heart; but when you are very hard up, and have seven children, and there is a profession and income offering itself to the eldest, it is provoking if he won't take

it. Lady Margaret was an earl's daughter, but her father had been neither a rich nor economical man; and it was thought a good thing when Lady Jane, who was not handsome, became a Catholic and took the veil; and an equally good thing when her sister, at seventeen, married a gentleman who was something in the Woods and Forests.

The Woods and Forests had maintained her very well, kept a handsome house within five minutes' walk of Hyde Park, and a well-appointed brougham; and never obliged its consort to trouble her head about money matters, or prudential calculations. Everything went very smoothly while Mr. Bellew lived. The pity was that he didn't go on living, but went and died instead: died just as Kate was beginning to think of the delight of coming out and being presented in another year, and Dick had been put into the hands of an expensive tutor to be crammed for college.

Lady Margaret called on her uncle, Lord Lovegoats, in floods of tears, and talked of the workhouse. It is even reported that she was heard to murmur something relative to "a mangle" or "lodgings for respectable single men." And, indeed, an income under two thousand a year is not much to keep up a household containing seven children, and four or five servants—one son at Rugby, another (whose chief correspondence with his family consisted of appeals for money) at Oxford, a governess for the rest, and a residence in the aristocratic precincts of Gresham Square, Hyde Park. Lord Lovegoats, too, was not as sympathetic as he might have been, or as Lady Margaret thought he might have been. He did, indeed, allow Dick a hundred a year for the present; and he kept a horse for Kate, brusquely observing that as his niece's first duty was to get that young lady married, it was only fair to assist her in showing off the youthful Circassian in a style of equality with others in the same rank.

He kept a horse for Kate—had, indeed, chosen it with care, and made it a present to her—but he did not add a groom, or an animal for that individual to ride on, until

Lady Margaret's frequent hints as to the great additional expense entailed on herself by Kate's new favorite, brought one of the Lovegoat grooms to the house, with the intimation that he had been ordered to attend Miss Bellew in all her future rides.

Myson used to come every day at the same hour, mounted on a very decent hack himself, and leading Kate's; and unless it were absolutely raining cats and dogs the young lady made a point of going, lest her great-uncle might think his kindness unappreciated, and revoke it.

Attentions from relations are sometimes a little onerous, as you know; and as Myson soon let out in the servants' hall that he had no other duty at home but to look after Miss Bellew's horse and horsemanship, and had, indeed, been hired for that sole and only purpose, Kate sometimes asked (in private) why on earth Uncle Theo. didn't give them the groom instead of lending him. He would have been so useful at Gresham Square, and might have obviated the necessity of keeping that boy in buttons, whose appearance at door and table gave seemliness and style to Lady Margaret's establishment.

Lord Lovegoats, however, had his own ideas on these subjects, and they were not identical with those of his great-niece. Still, he rather liked the girl, was proud of her appearance, and not unfrequently sent her ten pounds for a new ball dress, or tickets for the opera during the season.

Mrs. General de Ponsonby said she did not wonder that Kate Bellew had such bold manners, considering the stock she sprang from; and Dick declared that it was very fine for his uncle to rail at him. He, at any rate, meant to settle and reform long before he was seventy. Poor Dick! he did not look much like living to seventy at present; and Lord Lovegoats persisted in railing. He had even refused to see his great-nephew during the last vacation—not having forgiven the young man's rejection of his Church patronage; and Lady Margaret was at present meditating some scheme for concealing the fact (or at any rate the reason) of Dick's temporary retirement from the shades of Alma Mater.

I like Lady Margaret; but I do not think that nature had intended her for the head of a large family. Some women go very well in harness, and under a tight rein, and Lady Margaret was one of them. Had the Woods and Forests lived, she might have been looked up to on all sides as a model of an earl's daughter, and an English matron.

She looked like the former now, as she stood before the fire talking with Bernard Clive. A handsome woman still, tall and well made, with wavy bronze hair, like Kate's, only streaked with gray, and crowned with a small point-lace cap always awry; with half an inch of embroidered petticoat visible at one side beneath the hem of her black velvet dress; and a huge rent in the costly lace shawl dragged anyhow round her shoulders, and fastened by a big diamond brooch, whose broken pin, besides making the ungainly tear, had scratched her throat in two places. A shockingly untidy woman, and yet a lady every inch of her: nothing *bourgeoise*, nothing inconsistent with *une de nous autres*, as her friends would confess even while lamenting over her peculiarities.

"It's a little way of mamma's to throw on her clothes with a pitchfork, when I'm not by to look after her," Kate used to say, with a despairing little shrug of her shoulders; but all the same Kate admired her mother more than any other girls' mothers; and would have flared up in scorn and indignation, had any one dared to suggest that she might have been in any way altered for the better. Clive himself, surveying her with such small flash of his keen blue eyes as their lazy lids left uncovered—Clive, who called himself a man of the people, and talked in a radical way of "class humbugs" and "nature's nobility," recognized perfectly that the tall woman with the ill-made clothes, and the nervous hand rubbing imaginary flies off the end of her nose all the while she was talking to him, could not, under any circumstances, have stood behind a counter, dropped her "h's," or been "genteel."

"Lady Margaret is a wonderfully handsome woman," he said to Dick when they were upstairs "polishing" for

dinner. "That photograph you showed me gives one no idea of her."

"Oh! photos are generally awfully sells; and then my lady never will stand still, so it's no wonder she gets blurred," said Dick, carelessly. "I suppose she was good-looking once—something like Kate."

"Like your sister?" Clive said it inquiringly, and rather as in disparagement of the latter. Perhaps he did not admire Kate. Dick fancied so, at least, and was rather disgusted. He had not spoken much of his sister to this great friend of his. Like the generality of young Englishmen, especially those who are not particularly select in their feminine acquaintances, he was extremely shy of alluding to his family before the men who knew him away from them. Dick was not domestic; he was not even particularly filial; but he had one soft corner in his heart for home, and Kate filled it. In his eyes she was just the one girl worth anything, the prettiest, best, and nicest girl in the world. He was always worrying and often very unkind to Kate; but he believed in her, and felt a perfectly good and honest pride in the admiration she excited. That any one should not admire her seemed to him rather incredible; and, thinking as highly of the new fellow of St. John's as he did, he had been secretly rather anxious for a larger share than usual of his admiration for the pet sister.

The reality was disappointing.

"You know your way down, I think," he said, turning abruptly to the door. "I must go and speak to the girls," and so went out. Kate was watching for him on the stairs, and was equally amused and surprised when he put his hands round her waist, and held her away for a long critical look, before giving vent to the energetic comment:

"You're a million times nicer than half the girls about, let 'em say what they like."

"Glad you think so," said Kate, laughing, and reaching up to kiss him. "You're not nice—not nice at all, for coming back in this way. I wonder my face hasn't got a netting pattern of wrinkles on it, with you! I tell

you what it is, Dick, you'll be bringing my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave some day, if you—"

"Sorrow to the humbug!" interrupted Dick, curtly; "drop that, Kittie; I shall have enough in that line from my mother, without your striking in. Tell me instead—what do you think of Clive?"

"Of—of your friend?" said Kate, hanging her head doubtfully. "Well—I haven't seen much of him yet to—"

"To think much? I dare say not; but I suppose you have thought something. You can tell if you think you like him?"

"L—like him!" repeated Kate, still softly reluctant. "No, I don't think I—*like* him; I—you're sure you don't mind, Dick, do you, darling? but—but—I think him a pig: that's all: a stuck-up pig!"

"A-a-tcha!!!"

It was only a sneeze; but it came from the landing above them, on to which Mr. Bernard Clive had just stepped in his way downstairs.

CHAPTER III.

KATE PUNISHES MR. CLIVE.

DINNER was on the table: a very pretty little dinner—very prettily laid for eight; and in my opinion eight is just the right number for a cosy dinner-party, just big enough for particular conversations, and not too big for general sociability. Mr. Marryatt—a bald man with a long fat body, short fat legs, and a slow fat voice, which Madge said sounded as though he were giving you an unctuous pat between each word—took down Lady Margaret; and made blandly ponderous allusions to “our departed friend” (meaning the Woods and Forests) between every other sentence. Dick, as head of the house, took care of Mrs. Marryatt, a smallish, pallid woman, with a head suggestive of one of those skulls which the Greeks used to crown with flowers, and set on the dinner-table as a sort of mortuary warning; and a manner habitually depressed from a concatenation of mysterious ailments, the nature of which no doctor had been able to discover.

Mr. Philpots, the junior curate of St. Mark’s, a young man so dreadfully in love with Kate that he grew pink and damp all over with excitement if she even looked at him, paired off with Miss Fothergill, a gushing young lady of thirty or thereabouts; and—Kate was left to Clive!

Lady Margaret had arranged all that beforehand; and of course it was the right and proper thing; but, under the circumstances, Kate was not happy in the conjunc-

tion. Even her power of conversation had deserted her; and Clive did not help her. Indeed he made so little use of his tongue, that Kate could not help suspecting that his ears were sharper than she had thought, when she stoutly declared to Dick that it was utterly impossible he could have heard her most unluckily worded opinion. She felt better, however, when the soup was gone.

It was pleasant to see Dick's fair head at the bottom of the table again, even though, being displeased at her comment on his friend's manner, he did not vouchsafe to look in her direction. The flowers, too, which she had arranged for the table, looked very pretty as the gaslight fell on snowy arums glimmering out from dark emerald-fronded ferns, and dainty white and rose-colored cyclamen nodding their delicate fairy-like heads over beds of starry primula; and the dark shining leaves of bay and laurestinus. The massive silver on the sideboard, the crimson and gold-patterned china, the fire crackling cheerily in its frame of white and blue Dutch tiles, all made up a picture warm and bright in coloring. Even the street noises sounded dull and subdued through the heavy tapestry curtains, their once gorgeous hues toned down by age and smoke to a subdued tint of dusky richness.

Lady Margaret was smiling and chatting to her neighbor, and making occasional onslaughts on the imaginary fly at one and the same time. Mrs. Marryatt was trying to find out why Dick had returned from college in the middle of the Lent Term; and Dick was trying to foil her by pretending a great interest in the state of her health. Mr. Philpots and Miss Fothergill were whispering—or rather Miss Fothergill was whispering (some young ladies always will: it has a sweet, confidential air)—and Mr. Philpots was staring at Kate, and wondering who the tall, ugly man, with the eye-glass and the supercilious mouth, could be. A stranger certainly, and not a talkative one, for he hardly spoke to Kate; but that only proved him the more in love with her, according to the Rev. Herbert Philpots.

In that young man's eyes, no one could look at Miss

Bellew without falling in love with her. He was surrounded by a legion of imaginary rivals, each of whom appeared to him, for the time being, as the one and only obstacle in the way of his own love; and yet I very much doubt whether, if Kate and he had been shut up alone in a desert island for a dozen years, he would have ever found courage to hint at the warmth of his feelings to the young lady then sitting opposite to him, her bright round eyes turned fondly on that scapegrace Dick, and her pretty round arms, with the bewitching little dimples at wrist and elbow, just visible through a break in the screen of leaves and flowers between them. Somehow, and despite Miss Fothergill's prattling, the Rev. Herbert found himself engaged in metaphysical communings as to the wide difference between things called by the same name—as, for instance, elbows and wrists.

Given an elbow, or wrist, thought the curate, and every one fancies that he understands one and the same object as signified by that title; but show an elbow or a wrist—glance at that soft, creamy, dimpled arm of Kate's, and then turn to the red and "goosey" hook imperfectly concealed by Miss Fothergill's short lace sleeves, and the red and shiny knob not at all concealed by Miss Fothergill's jingling bracelets—and would any one dare pronounce that two substantives so utterly different could or should come under the same definition?

Poor Miss Fothergill! It was not her fault that she was thin—painfully thin. She did her best, and tried to make up for the scarcity of flesh and blood by showing a liberal display of bone. Her pink silk dress was *décolletée*—very much so; and yet there was no shadow of impropriety in it! It might have been more *décolletée* yet without even calling a frown to the rigid brow of Mrs. General de Ponsonby, or reminding the most imaginative of aught besides those attenuated savages at the entrance to the Crystal Palace nave. You looked at her and you felt pity—pity and a great desire to cover those poor shivering shoulder-blades with something

warmer than the slight raiment of violet-powder: traces of which were visible on Mr. Philpots's right sleeve and shoulder, thus as it were (in the language of South American sheep-farmers) marking him as pertaining to the Fothergill fold.

He was aware of the premature seal of proprietorship himself, and fancying (of course) that every one at table was equally interested in the fact, hated Miss Fothergill with a hatred which was basely ungrateful; for she was doing her very best to amuse him, chattering away at the top of her high, vivacious voice, with little "staccato" notes of exclamation, and shrill interludes of youthful laughter bubbling up, as it were, from the very overflowing of her joyous nature.

"I went to the florist's about the Easter decorations," she was saying, leaning over the hapless Herbert, and writing fresh testimonies on his broadcloth with the hook afore-mentioned. "You told mamma that you wanted to have all the details arranged a good while beforehand, this year; so I went at once; and—oh, fancy!—I walked all the way alone! It was in the afternoon, too; and mamma was quite shocked. She said, 'Flora, I can't allow it. Suppose some rude man was to speak to you!' and indeed I did feel a little nervous; but I knew no one has flowers like Luckings, and I put on a thick, *thick* veil—oh! I don't think even you would have known me—but just fancy being seen alone, and nearly a mile! and people do say such things if a girl is at all—you know—independent; but indeed I almost ran all the way; and you don't think it was fast of me, Mr. Philpots, do you? I held my parasol close in front of my face, you know, when any one looked at all—at all particularly, you know.—Kate!" (catching Miss Bellew's eye, and leaning more forward still in juvenile eagerness) "*did* you hear of my going all the way to Luckings's alone on Friday? I would have called for you, only I knew you would be out; and now I am afraid Mr. Philpots thinks me a dreadfully wild thing for—"

"Wild!" repeated Kate, opening her brown eyes wide; "bless me, I hope Mr. Philpots couldn't be so silly! *What earthly wildness* is there in going to the florist?"

"Only—alone, you know," said Miss Fothergill, a little quenched; "and in the afternoon when there are so many people—men, you know—about."

"Well; but the men don't hurt us, do they?" asked Kate, with unsympathetic bluntness.

"Oh! my dear Kate, you are so funny; but every one knows what strange men are: so very—very—"

"Wild?" suggested Clive suddenly, and with extreme demureness. "H'm—very strange indeed. I thought they were pretty civilized in these parts."

"Miss Fothergill means common men, of course," said the Rev. Herbert in mild explanation. "One does meet rough specimens everywhere occasionally; and I have heard of their speaking to ladies now and then, at least when they were young and—ahem!—pretty."

"People always hear of those sort of things," said Kate, demolishing the curate with the first note of her clear, audacious voice; "but I don't believe in them. I know I go everywhere alone, if it happens to be necessary, and no one ever yet spoke to me."

"Mr. Philpots only alluded to that danger in connection with young and pretty people. It was not a general statement, Miss Bellew," put in Clive, with the same demure languor as before.

The Rev. Herbert flushed scarlet. Did this insolent barrister mean to insinuate that his adorable neighbor was neither young nor lovely? Indignation choked him; and luckily, before he had recovered sufficiently for speech, the butler touched his arm with "'Ock, sir?" and Miss Fothergill rushed again into the van. She was not irate, not at all. Kate had in a manner snubbed her, and the stranger—who had probably fallen in love with her across the table—was returning cut for cut.

"Perhaps I am unfortunate," she said, with a little simper. "Of course I never go out unchaperoned in general (so funny of you, dear Kate, to do such things!); but even with mamma, people have stared or been unpleasant. I remember one day I was stepping out of the carriage at Swan and Edgar's—I wore my hair in curls then, and I suppose it was rather thick and noticeable; but

what can you do to hide it? I'm sure I often wish I had none—and two men who were passing stared so unpleasantly, and said something about 'a pair of tongs.' So rude! I was quite frightened; and as it happens, you know—with a little laugh—"I never use tongs. All our hair, the Fothergill hair, curls quite naturally."

"I wonder if I might rush out into the hall for a moment," said Clive to his plate, and in the very lowest of whispers.

"The hall!" repeated Kate, the quick-eared, staring.

"Oh, of course it is a wild desire, but I should like to scream. However, I suppose the butler wouldn't approve."

"Do not be so absurd," said Kate, rebuking but confidential. "I don't suppose she did understand what they meant, or she wouldn't have said it."

"You understand perfectly, I see, but I suppose you are a believer in your sex's simplicity.—No, thank you" (to the servant with cream tarts).

"No, I think most of us are great humbugs generally. We have to be; but then we humbug ourselves more than we do other people."

"And you believe that your friend has humbugged herself—I use your own expression, so make no apologies—into fancying that she could not walk alone in Bayswater?"

"Why not? And what is the matter with the expression?"

"Nothing; it is both forcible and lucid; though, in this case, I rather doubt its correctness. I am not so sure that Miss Fothergill would be safe—from all classes."

"What, tipsy men? Oh! but one meets them so seldom, and—"

"I beg your pardon, I don't mean tipsy men."

"Who then?"

"Anatomical students."

"Mr. Clive, I don't allow these sort of remarks. Flora is my friend."

"Exactly, or I shouldn't have followed your lead in making game of her."

Kate was speechless with indignation.

"But I thought you were going up for your 'little go,' Mr. Dick," said Mrs. Marryatt. "Have you passed it? because, if so, I ought to congratulate you."

"Passed it?" said Dick, hurriedly. "Oh, dear! no. Let me give you some port.—Burbage! port this way."

"No, certainly not, Mr. Dick, thank you. I have been taking claret. You know we were so surprised to hear you would be in town all the spring. Kate mentioned it to our Bessie; but I said impossible, for I know dear Lady Margaret was so anxious that—"

"But you are drinking nothing, Mrs. Marryatt; and this claret is such washy stuff. You ought to take that new Greek wine—what's its name?—that doctors are always crying up. Hasn't yours recommended it to you? You have Sir James, haven't you?"

"Not now. Oh, dear! no; I was obliged to change; he took no interest, none at all"—and Mrs. Marryatt forgot college matters in the pathos of her own woes—"never even cared to find out what was the matter with me; and so utterly unsympathetic that—"

"But, my dear Lady Margaret," said Mr. Marryatt ponderously, "surely it is time he should choose a profession. Our departed friend, I know, thought with me that a young man cannot begin to consider his way of life too early; and if he were to go into the Church—"

"But he won't. That is just what he won't," interrupted Lady Margaret, always ready to pour out her grievances to any friendly ear. "And Lord Lovegoats will never forgive it. Such a nice living, Mr. Marryatt! a little damp perhaps; but such a sweet, quiet living, with no temptations—positively no temptations to—to do anything! I went on my knees to my uncle to get him to keep it for Tom; but he declares he will sell it. Is it not enough to break my heart?"

"Most distressing, indeed. The irrational perversity of the junior male sex of this era is a thing to be deplored by all right-minded—"

"Do you think a cross of white violets and ivy would look well?" murmured Miss Fothergill in the curate's ear.

"Oh, no more grapes, please! Kate said primroses in moss; but if *you* think violets—"

"Oh! no, Mr. Marryatt," said Kate, "valentines are not only for silly young ladies. You should see our Dottie's delight in hers. I sent it to her; and she came dancing on to my bed in the morning, holding it out, with 'See what a gentleman 's dived me!' as triumphantly as a girl of sixteen over her first offer."

"Kate!" cried Dick, across the table, "do you know what part of Syria the Amalekites came from?"

"No," said Kate, laughing. "I'll ask mamma.—Mamma!"—raising her voice. And then Lady Margaret looked up with a startled smile, and gave the signal for rising. No one but Dick knew that Kate had given it first and by his suggestion. These young Bellews had a perfect code of secret signs and countersigns; and Lady Margaret was rather prone to spinning out dessert when she was on her family hobby-horse.

Kate had not spoken to Clive since he made the remark last recorded; nor did she look at him when he held the door open for her exit. He made no remark either; but he smiled slightly as she passed out with head erect and eyes studiously averted. It was not a disagreeable smile: rather that of a man pleasantly amused by the mischievous caprices of a frolicsome kitten. Kate, however, thought much more seriously of his unjustifiable retort. When the gentlemen came upstairs, she called Mr. Philpots to her at once, raising that young man to the seventh heaven by so doing; and then dashed him down again by dismissing him with a few bright words to turn over the leaves of Miss Fothergill's music.

"You have such a correct eye. No one turns over so beautifully," Kate said, with one of her sweetest smiles, as she slipped away and flung herself into an argument going on between Dick and Mr. Marryatt, privately hoping the while that Clive would feel himself in disgrace, and recognize his punishment. "He wants a lesson," she said to herself.

He may have wanted it, but he did not appear to suffer from it, or even to consider himself in punishment at all.

On the contrary, after a word or two of a merry sort with Lady Margaret, he strolled away to the sofa-table, where Eve and Madge, in white muslin frocks with blue sashes, and George, with a clean collar so preternaturally stiffened that it had cut a deep line in his fat cheeks, were amusing themselves with drawing-room propriety. I am afraid Clive broke up the propriety when he joined the group. At any rate, Kate heard great bursts of most unconventionally riotous laughter wafted to her over Mr. Marryatt's prosing; and saw Eve's pale little face glowing quite brightly, while Madge's impetuous voice asked:

"Didn't you think there were so many of us?"

"I fancy I thought there were more."

"Why?"

"From certain sounds proceeding from a room downstairs when we arrived this evening."

"Ah! George, I told you what a noise you were making," said Eve, in a grown-up little voice, as anxious to show that she was not among the noisy ones.

"It was Madge too," growled George, "and Kate, and Dottie. You needn't talk as if it were all me."

"I assure you," said Clive, politely, "such a wild idea never crossed my mind. I only wondered not to see you at the table."

"There was no room," said Eve, quietly, "so I dined with the children in the schoolroom."

"But you always dine in the schoolroom when there is company, whether there is room or not," put in George, crushingly, "and you are a child too. You're not come out yet, and people are always children till they come out. Kate says so. Kate is nineteen, Mr. Clive, and I'm nine, and Eve—"

"Yes, Kate wishes it," said Eve, a little angrily, but always soft-voiced and dove-like. "One grown-up daughter is enough, you know. When Kate is married I shall come out; and, besides, our dining-room is too small. It is tiny."

"But it is not the *real* dining-room. It is the school-room," cried George, thrusting his oar in again with unnecessary candor. We use the real dining-room for our

lessons and play. Miss Smith is there now. You can go down and see her, if you like. Mamma said she would rather use the little one, because then no one could expect her to give dinner—”

“Don’t you think you are fatiguing yourself with talking?” said Clive. “Your voice is very powerful, but I think it must want a rest. Suppose you give it one.”

“I don’t know what you mean,” said George, staring. “Are you a doctor? I thought you were a lawyer. I’m going to be a lawyer some day. Burbage told Jane that they were all a set of thieves, but I don’t think he knows. He told me—”

“Why, Clive,” cried Dick, coming up to the sofa-table, “fancy these brats getting hold of you. Eve, what a color you’ve got!” And then the chatter and fun grew noisier, till it attracted Mr. Philpots and Miss Fothergill, and only poor Kate was compelled to go on talking, or rather listening, to Mr. Marryatt, as he waded on and on in a sea of argument about something in which she took no manner of interest whatsoever.

A request for a “little music” released her at last, but Mr. Marryatt followed her with officious courtesy, and all through her song she could hear the ripple of mirth, only a little subdued, from the other end of the room. She did not miss one voice, or guess that the antagonist who had spoiled her evening was sitting apart from the rest, drinking in each note of the pure, sweet contralto, which trembled with such pathetic melody over one of those exquisitely simple, tear-compelling ballads of one of our sweetest English composers. She had forgotten Clive just as he had remembered her. Only those who love to sing, sing well or lovably, and Kate’s heart was in her song. There was a mist over Clive’s keen blue eyes as she finished, and he started when Miss Fothergill spoke to him.

“Don’t you admire Miss Bellew’s voice, Mr. Clive? People generally think it exceedingly fine—a *little* weak in the high notes perhaps, don’t you think?—but very touching. M—— taught her, you know. Do you like his style?”

"I really can hardly tell you," Clive said. "I scarcely thought about it. The song was perfect."

"But you didn't care about the singing? Oh, Mr. Clive, I am surprised.—Kate, I find Mr. Clive is a terribly severe musical critic. I shall not try my poor little voice before him."

After that, Kate "punished" Clive by singing two more songs, and Clive enjoyed them heartily, and at going to bed thanked her for the very pleasant evening he had spent.

But Kate was not satisfied with herself. She had spoken hastily of a stranger, using an unbecoming phrase in so doing, and he had overheard her, which of itself was enough to disturb her; and then she had rather snubbed her friend at her own table, and been surprised and offended at the stranger taking up her cue and telling her in so many words that she was to blame for it. Now, she acknowledged that she had been to blame, and could not be satisfied till she had gone into her mother's room and made confession. Poor little Kate! She was always making mistakes from not staying to think before she spoke. She was just as quick at acknowledging the mistakes, it is true, and making atonement; but is there not a proverb "shutting the stable door"?

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. SPINKS'S LODGER.

IT was the quietest little row of houses imaginable—one of those rows of brand-new suburban cottages, built of yellow brick picked out with white, with a flight of three steps up to the front door of each, a bow-window much like a good-sized bird-cage in the front; and a square of dirt or grass about the dimensions of a table-cover in front of that. A row of houses, each of which displays the identical little round table flanked by a rickety chair on either side, and crowned by a crochet cover, and a vase of highly unnatural wax fruit, under a glass shade, in every aforesaid bow-window along the line; the whole shaded by ragged-looking netted curtains from within, and pots of dusty, withered plants, original nature unknown, without—houses which sprout forth every here and there into a card with "Furnished Bedroom," or a brass plate with the title, "J. Le Feuvre, Prof. Dancing," or "Miss Binks, Court Dressmaker and Milliner," engraved on it. Not aristocratic houses, though. Not an aristocratic neighborhood—dull, far away from everywhere, badly lit, semi-paved, with other rows of half-built houses beyond, and visions of damp, stagnant meadows, and intersecting railway arches in the background—a place to make you depressed as you skim past it in a railway carriage, *en route* for Clapham or the Crystal Palace—a place swarming with sickly, aguish children, lively with blue-mould and black-beetles, and made dangerous by a gas-works standing precisely in the

centre of the deepest and blackest quagmire, in the dampest and dismalest of the outlying slums in the neighborhood.

Even Mrs Spinks, standing on her front doorstep, with the red light of the setting sun in her eyes, and making little green and purple circles in the chilly spring atmosphere around her, yawned drearily, and drew mental contrasts between "these 'ere raw new places, and the old three-pair-back in the City. Of course it were nicer to ave a 'ouse of your own, an' let lodgin's, than live in hother folks 'ouses, an' only be a lodger yourself; but, all the same, it weren't lively when you've lived in a bustlin' part, with nice sociable folk about you, to come out to a gashly 'ole like this. Certingly the school was handy, and she wouldn't ha' known wot to do without it for her boys, as 'ad ought to be in afore now, an' 'ad their teas afore the lodger come 'ome an' wanted hers, which 'ere she were, a-comin' up the street now, and perhaps 'er fire out—who knows? Not that she's a fault-findin' one, or, for the matter o' that, one to talk much about anything."

She did not look like a talker—not, at any rate, like one who would have wasted much conversation on Mrs. Spinks: a tall woman, with a beautiful, upright figure, and the face of a queen—calmly proud, and coldly fair. Plain as were her black dress and mantle—plain almost to meagreness—they fell about her with something of the grace of a regal vesture; and her step was as firm, her graceful head as lofty, as though she had just walked down from a throne for familiar intercourse with her subjects.

There are some people who seem, as it were, born to the purple. Mrs. Spinks's lodger was one of them.

She looked tired, too, this poor queen—obliged to rent a humble pair of rooms at No. 2, Alma Terrace—tired and disappointed, with a pale worn shadow about the broad brow, and quiet resolute mouth. Even Mrs. Spinks noticed it, and as she moved aside for the convenience of her lodger's ingress, said, sympathetically:

"Good evenin', m'm. You do look rarely beat, to be sure."

"I am a little tired—thank you"—spoken in a low, rich tone, which yet told of more than bodily fatigue.

"An' 'll be glad of a good cup of tea, I daresay, m'm. I'll have it ready for you dreckly. 'The kettle 'ave been bilin' this hour or more, an' I were just alookin' out for they two limbs o' mischief o' mine, which they'd ought to ha' been 'ome these twenty minutes. Mrs. Giles's little gurrils at No. 8, they comed 'ome more'n a bit ago. An' what'll you take with your tea, m'm?"

"Nothing, thank you, except a piece of toast."

"Which there is *not* a very clear fire in the kitchen for that, m'm, an' I won't deceive you; but the kettle it biled over, and roused up all the ashes, besides of black-in' the coals."

"Never mind, then; I can do it in the parlor," said the lodger, resignedly, as, untying her bonnet-strings, she sat down with the heavy air of one too weary to care for anything but rest. Mrs. Spinks stared at her curiously.

"You *do* look beat, m'm. Won't you 'ave nothink more than the toast? I'd bile you a hegg in no time; or couldn't you fancy a snack of bacon, now? It 'ud do you good, for you don't look as if you'd 'ad no dinner to speak on."

"I was too busy to take any; but I would rather have nothing but tea, thank you, Mrs. Spinks." And then she got up to avoid any more talking, and went into the inner room.

Mrs. Spinks poked the fire, made it smoke, and departed rather irritably.

"This is the fourth day as she've been hout from mornin' to sundown, an' come in 'alf dead, an' never says a word of where she's been or nothin' to nobody," the good woman said to her husband, who was smoking his pipe in the kitchen.

"Don't she pay you your rent reg'lar?"

"She do that, Spinks, which I won't deny."

"Or are she all 'ung about with mock jools; or are she dressed like the decent widder body she calls 'erself?"

"Which I 'ave *not* seen a jool about 'er yet, mock nor real," murmured Mrs. Spinks.

"No, nor you ain't no call to see what aren't theer."

"Well, Spinks, an' did I say as I '*ad*'?" remonstrated Mrs. Spinks, in a slightly aggravated tone, as she tilted the kettle forward with a view to pouring some of its contents into the tea-pot. "I'm sure as I've never said nothin' agin' 'er, except as she is *not* like other women, but a deal stiffer an' closer, an' that I'll stick to."

"A deal less talk, you mean, an' a good job, too," growled Mr. Spinks. "Now then!" (as two red-headed, out-of-elbowed urchins tumbled pell-mell into the kitchen, kicking each other's shins, and shouting at the top of their voices) "Ow's a man to smoke 'is pipe in peace, with a couple of scamps like you a-rearin' an' a-tearin' round 'im like a kuppel o' wild 'osses?"

"An' upsettin' of the lodger's tea!" cried Mrs. Spinks, pouncing on the new-comers, and administering "cloutin'" with a vigor which was partly attributable to the fact that the tea spilled was that "first cup," which landladies consider their rightful perquisite, out of the lodger's tea-pot.

That lady meanwhile was sitting over the small fire in her cheerless little drab-walled parlor, upstairs. The wind, which had risen since she came in, shook the crazy frame of the miniature bow-window, and made it creak and quiver as though it were about to part bodily from the rest of the house. Even the badly-starched netted curtains fluttered their dingy festoons; and now and then little puffs of smoke rushed out of the grate into the lodger's face, and would have brought water into her eyes—but that it was there already; and the long white fingers had hard ado to stem the bitter tide which strove to overflow their slender outposts, as, with head bowed almost to her knees, she gave way to the grief so long and sternly hidden.

It was not for long. A noisy clattering, and then a sort of jingling bump at the door, as though the tray had walked upstairs of itself and was kicking for admittance, announced Mrs. Spinks with the tea; and in one second the lady had dashed away her tears, drawn herself erect, and straightened the sober little widow's-cap which sat

with such strange, sad suitability on her waveless bands of golden hair.

When the landlady entered, her face was turned to the fire; and she appeared to be too languid, or too busy warming her hands, to turn round.

"Why, if you ain't hall in the dark, m'm!" cried the good woman. "I'd ought to ha' lighted the gas, ought-n't I? which I'll do it now; an' a nasty night it is, a blowin' one's 'ead hoff if one puts it houtside fur 'alf a minute; an' 'ere's the toastin'-fork, m'm. You're sure as you wont 'ave a hegg now?"

"Quite sure, thank you. I shall want nothing more till I ring for the things to be taken away."

The lady spoke gently, but still she kept her eyes on the fire; and Mrs. Spinks was huffed.

"Hif one's good enuff to be spoke to, one's good enuff to be looked at," as she remarked to her husband, after jerking the tray on to the table, and shutting the door with a bang suggestive of her bruised and mortified feelings.

The lodger did not perceive it. A slight shiver indeed passed over her shoulders at the noisy closing of the door; but it was very slight, as of one used to such ebullitions; and then her head dropped on her hands again. The gas had been lit, and flared up upon the low, smoke-browned ceiling, the drab walls, patterned by a species of decayed cabbages, and enlivened by three pictures in black frames—one, a gorgeous print of a Scripture subject; another consisting of an oil painting so black with age, smoke, and dirt, as to present no distinguishable object to the beholder save a pyramidal black mass, with a dirty round smear somewhere near the top, and just below it two grimy white patches, supposed to be a portrait intended to represent some worthy in gown and bands; and the third, plain to see, being simply a family group of Spinks photographs cut out and pasted pyramidally in one common frame: a work of art doubtless most precious to the originals themselves; and useful even to strangers as conveying a warning, wherever else you went "to be taken," not to go to *that* photographer.

Over the fireplace was a mirror, two feet high by four wide, the once gilt frame obscured by soot-blackened green gauze, the surface wavy. Below it, on the mantel-piece, were tastefully disposed a couple of large mother-of-pearl shells, flanked by a white and blue china vase filled with spills at either corner; a pedestal supporting a plaster of Paris bust of Dickens under a glass shade, in the centre.

In the middle of the much worn drugget, bought second-hand from the pawnbroker, stood the table, covered with a cheap, brand-new cloth, in red and blue squares; facing the bow-window, a narrow horse-hair sofa, with the stuffing protruding in sundry places, and partly concealed by a ragged crochet anti-macassar: this in connection with half a dozen chairs more or less disabled, the little table aforementioned in the bow-window, and a lady's davenport in inlaid woods, strikingly out of keeping with the rest of the apartment, completing the furniture which Mrs. Spinks had brought into light by way of cheering her lady lodger.

The general result was—not successful!

There is no good in crying, however, when no one cares whether you do or not; neither is there any use in letting your tea get cold, when it is already so weak that it only requires to lose its heat to be positively undrinkable, and is the only meal you are likely to get for the next twelve hours.

And besides, in Mrs. Spinks's gas there was a cold, glaring unsympathy, a tacitly chilling effect on the emotions, which the lady appeared to recognize. She had just dried her tears again, and swallowed one cup of the lukewarm water miscalled tea, with a slice of the bread and butter which she had no heart to toast, when both she and the family in the basement were startled by a noise very unusual in those parts.

Rat-a-tat-tat-tat-tat-TAT!

"It were the fust time," and Mrs. Spinks said it advisably, "the fust time as she'd ever 'eard sich a clatterin' at 'er door in all 'er born days; an' it brought the 'eart into 'er mouth, it did. The lodger, she were used to givin' one o' they long shivery-shaky little knocks at the door,

seemingly as if her wrists weren't strong enough for one good rap; but she never made a noise like this, nor yet comed a-dashin' an' clashin' up to the 'ouse in a 'ansom cab, a-frighenin' 'er so as she could 'ardly find breath to get to the door."

Nevertheless Mrs. Spinks did get to the door, severely snubbing the offers from both boys to fulfill that office for her; and being indeed devoured with curiosity to know what the person wanted who had put her nerves to such unseemly torture.

Her curiosity mounted tenfold when, on opening the portal, she found herself confronted by a tall gentleman in a light overcoat, whose voice had an awe-inspiring sharpness and authority as he asked:

"You have a lady lodger here haven't you?"

"Certingly," said Mrs. Spinks, defiantly, "which I have no call to deny it; an' what may your pleasure be?"

"Be so kind as to give her my card, and say I hope she will excuse the lateness of my call."

He handed her the card as he spoke, and Mrs. Spinks received it dubiously between a grimy thumb and finger, and read the name on it with leisurely suspicion, before taking it in to her lodger with the brief announcement:

"A gentleman a-wantin' you, m'm."

"A gentleman!"

Curiosity mounted higher still before that white face and startled look. Without glancing at the card, the lady added quickly:

"Did he know my name?—ask for me by name, I mean?"

"He said 'the lady as lodges with you, Mrs. Spinks, m'm,'" replied the landlady, severely, "which I'm free to confess also as he howned it were not a hour when he'd any right to be visitin' a lone woman."

The pale face flushed and the proud lip twitched.

"Say I am not at home—not well enough to receive any visitors." She added the last half of the sentence after a startled glance at the name on the card; but it came too late. Tired of waiting on the step, the visitor had advanced farther up the passage, and was now looking over the landlady's shoulder.

"Forgive my intrusion, Mrs. Grey," he said, taking off his hat, and showing a clever, plain face, lit by a pair of wonderfully keen blue eyes. "It is horribly late; but surely you won't send me away, after I have come all these miles to see and shake hands with you again."

He moved Mrs. Spinks unceremoniously out of the opening as he spoke, and receiving no farther rebuff, nodded cavalierly to that ill-used woman, and shut the door in her face.

"Which you may call it what you like, Spinks," cried the landlady as, after a vain attempt at hearing what was going on within, she flounced downstairs, red with indignation and stooping, "but remember as I warned you this wery hevenin' as ever lived, Spinks. If you'll believe me, 'er face turned to the whiteness of hashes, an' she looked all for one as Martha Briggs did the day she was 'ad up for not registerin' 'er baby, poor gurr!!"

"P'raps he's 'er 'usbin," suggested Mr. Spinks, removing his pipe in the interest of the moment, "an' she've sloped acause of 'is beatin' 'er; an' he've been a-lookin' arter 'er 'igh an' low to—"

"Pah!" broke in Mrs. Spinks, with ladylike scorn for the tame supposition. "Didn't I 'ear 'im speak to her? and did he speak as a 'usbin does? Now I ask you that, did he?"

"Not being theer, I ain't free to say," said Mr. Spinks, putting his pipe into his mouth again, after a preliminary blow at the ashes, and with the air of one too used to being snubbed to resent it.

I agree with Mrs. Spinks. There was little of marital authority in the grave, kindly, almost affectionate tone of Bernard Clive's voice, as he took the widow's hand in his, saying, reproachfully:

"Mrs. Grey, why have you run away and hidden yourself from us like this?"

CHAPTER V.

DICK'S DIFFICULTIES.

A CONCLAVE was sitting in the dining-room of No. 15, Gresham Square, the terrible "Council of Three" revived, only consisting of the unterrifying elements of Lady Margaret, Dick, and Bernard Clive. Breakfast over, which was a family meal, this trio had remained below after the dispersion of the rest; and George, racing in there about eleven to refresh his brain as to the separate quotients of nine times thirteen and thirteen times nine, had been expelled with a promptitude which sent him in a scarlet and injured condition to his studies, remarking indignantly that mamma was crying, and Dick in such a temper as never was. "Why ever didn't he stay away instead of coming home to make everything disagreeable, and push a fellow out by the shoulders directly he put his nose into a room?"

"I think it is a pity you are not both away," said Eve, in her quiet little voice. "There is never any peace or rest where there are boys—is there, Miss Smith?—Madge, that is the ninth time you have struck the wrong note in that bar."

"I can't help it; my finger *will* slip," said Madge, almost tearfully. "There!"—as another hideous discord made Eve put her fingers into her delicate little ears.

"I think if you tried you could help it, my dear," said patient Miss Smith, resignedly; and then Kate's voice was heard in gay exclamation as she opened the dining-room door.

"Dick won't push *her* out," said George.

Kate was quite unaware of the existence of conclaves, tears, or disputes. After breakfast she had run upstairs as usual, to perform the young-lady-like duties which fell to her share as eldest daughter—the flowers to be watered and rearranged in conservatory and drawing-room; the canary to be fed; an evening dress to be examined and handed over for repairs to the maid, who divided her services between Lady Margaret and the two elder girls; and a couple of notes to be written, one of which required a great deal of pen-nibbling and meditation, with the pretty head very much on one side, and the pretty rose-tipped fingers rumpling the bronze locks in a terrible fashion.

"Horrid thing!" muttered Kate, with her forehead drawn into a very mother-bunch of wrinkles, and stabbing her pen viciously through a mistake. "I wish we lived in America, where you can always call on, or invite, the one member of a family that you want to see, and the others never dream of being offended. I tell you what it is" (there was no one to tell it to but Twitters the canary, and Tidlums the Persian kitten, but that didn't matter), "there is something very wrong in society in this country, and I wish some one would alter it. I've a good mind to write a letter to the *Times*. As if one wanted all those Bickersteth girls! Oh, why wasn't Mildred born first, so that she might have been given the precedence by right?"

Kate was still rumpling her locks, and wishing that a letter to the *Times* might have remedied this second error as well, when a message came to her that it was time to dress for her ride; and finishing in hot haste the letter over which she had been puzzling so long, she dashed upstairs to dress; then remembering of a sudden the delightful fact of Dick's presence downstairs, hurriedly buttoned her riding habit, and ran down to secure his services as cavalier in the park, instead of those of her usual attendant.

"And upon my word, never stirred since breakfast! You three idle— Why, what's the matter?"

She had burst into the room bright and smiling, with

a host of saucy dimples playing about her rosy cheeks; but she broke off sharply, for Lady Margaret, her cap more awry than usual, was leaning back in the big leathern armchair with her handkerchief to her eyes; Dick, flushed and angry-looking, with his legs crossed and his chair tilted back, was talking in sharp, petulant tones; and Mr. Clive, looking up from a pile of papers before which he was seated, appeared to be remonstrating with his usual half-lazy sarcasm.

Outside, above the brown wire blinds, a thousand little silvery buds, tipped with green, peeped hardily out on every twig and bough of the bare, spidery, brown branches of elm and hawthorn in the square, against a background of pale blue sky, heaped up with ragged, snow-white clouds. Bells were ringing in the distance; a man crying "Chickweed!" at the corner; and above and over all the pale February sunshine was streaming cheerily, lighting up the dark oak-colored walls of the small dining-room, and bringing out all the cracks in the paint and all the dinginess in the frames of the venerable paintings, which looked down in all the dignity of faded oils and family pomp upon the modern group beneath. Sunlight is a terrible foe to age, and dust, and tarnish. It shines out very beneficially on a bright, pretty face, framed in waving hair, and a ripe young figure trimly buttoned up in a dark blue habit; but it points rebukingly to the lines of temper and dissipation, laughs ill-naturedly at time-worn carpets and faded mahogany, and is generally disagreeably officious in showing up things not meant to be seen.

"What *is* the matter?" said Kate, seeing that no one answered her. "Mother, has any one been worrying you?" And then she went and put her warm, soft arm round Lady Margaret's shoulder, and glared indignantly at Clive. There was no one else to glare at—except Dick; and Kate's eyes could not have glared at him.

Said Dick, snappishly, "Nonsense, Kittie. We are only talking business; but my mother always makes a fuss. There! be off. There's no need for you to worry about it."

"A fuss!" sobbed Lady Margaret, looking indignantly

over her handkerchief. "How can you be so—so cruel, Dick? But you will kill me some day. It is dreadful.—Is it not dreadful, Mr. Clive? Five hundred pounds more than his allowance gone in nine months; and then this—this wicked—"

"Need we enter upon it before Miss Bellew?" said Clive, gently. "Perhaps, as Dick suggests, it is not necessary she should be troubled about such matters."

"Troubled!" repeated Kate, haughtily. "Everything that troubles my mother and Dick troubles me, Mr. Clive; he has no secrets from me, not *any*" (with emphasis), "and certainly what a stranger can discuss I may hear."

"I beg your pardon most humbly," said Clive, veiling irony, which Kate felt in every nerve, beneath profound politeness. "I was foolish enough to imagine that your brother did not initiate you into all his private affairs, and equally foolish in fancying that you would not desire to enter into them in public. I had forgotten, however, how much advanced in these subjects young ladies have grown of late. Pray forgive my interference."

"Don't be a goose, Kate," put in Dick, ungraciously. "You don't know what you are talking about."

"My dear Kate," said Lady Margaret, remonstrating. "Mr. Clive is quite right. This is not a subject for you or—or any one" (with a reproachful glance at her son); "only as the consequences of this unhappy boy's errors always fall on me, I am obliged to hear of them."

Poor Kate! every one had given her a rap; and it was her own fault. She *felt* scarlet down to the tips of her fingers, and longed to run away and hide herself in the lumber-closet at the other end of the house. To submit to be snubbed, however, by that odious lawyer, and retreat from her own dining-room at his command, would be too humiliating. Instinctively the young lady decided that between her and Bernard Clive must be war to the knife; and while still horribly, painfully crimson in every visible inch of her fair skin, she answered, with a brave attempt at *sang-froid*:

"You spoke of money, mamma. Please don't cry in

that way. Is Dick in debt again? Perhaps it is not so bad as it has been made appear to you. Things often look worse at first.—Don't vex mamma, Dick, dear. Wait till we can talk it over quietly. Don't you see how upset she is? When we are by ourselves" (and Kate shot a Parthian glance at the intruder) "you can explain about it."

"Miss Bellew appears to be under the belief that things grow smaller by being kept," said Clive, with calm amusement—"a young lady's doctrine, comfortable, but—not reducible to fact, as she will perhaps find when she has acquired a few more years' experience. In the meantime" (looking at his watch), "as I have unfortunately an appointment at one, shall we go on with these papers, Lady Margaret? You are sure it does not tire you?"

"Oh, no; it is so good of you to interest yourself—so wonderfully good and kind!" cried Lady Margaret, rubbing her nose vigorously, and smiling gratefully on her visitor. "I am sure I don't know what I should do without you to-day.—Who is that?"

"Miss Bellew's 'orse!" said Buttons, opening the door, and putting in a round bullet-head, all agog with curiosity. Of course the basement story were fully acquainted with the fact of conclave, tears, and troubles, long ago. "Waitin' at the door, please, m'm; and please, m'm, is Myers to go 'isself, or lengthen the stirrupses for Mister Dick?"

"Of course there is no hope of you," said Kate, turning sorrowfully to Dick. "Oh, why is it so fine? Uncle Lovegoats will be sure to be out, or something, and know if I stay at home. I hate going now; and, oh! I had so looked forward to having you."

"I really think we could go over these without you, Dick, if you want to ride with your sister," Clive observed, with a gracious affability for which Kate could have boxed his ears. "It is a pity she should be disappointed and I think I can understand these perfectly by myself, and can perhaps explain them better to your mother."

"Of course, *that* is out of the question," began Kate, magnanimously, anxious to cut off her nose to spite her face; but Dick interrupted her.

"Can you really, old fellow? Then I'll take myself off for an hour. It is impossible to do business quietly when people make such a fuss. My head is spinning like a mill-wheel as it is."

"I am sure, my dear boy—" began Lady Margaret, pleadingly; but Dick was already out of the room, and in another five minutes he and Kate were slowly trotting in the direction of the Park.

They did not speak for some minutes. Kate's happy spirits were quite quenched by the scene in the dining-room; and Dick always waited to be amused, even when he was in a good temper, which was not the case at present. The sun was shining brightly, and the Bayswater Road was crowded with cabs, carriages, omnibuses, and people of all genders, ages and conditions, crossing and recrossing in every direction. Just at the turning from the Edgeware road, a hansom and an omnibus almost came into collision; and the former, swerving out of the way, made Kate's horse rear, and splashed her habit with mud. Dick uttered an oath, not quite inaudibly. It was the first time he had opened his lips; and as they turned into the Park under the Marble Arch, Kate spoke what had been on her mind since they left the house.

"Now, Dick, what *is* the matter—what has put you out so much, and upset mamma? Tell me."

"Put me out! I don't know what you mean. My mother may be put out, if you like. I am not."

The tone was a sufficient barometer. It pointed full to "stormy;" and Kate, like an astute mariner (Ah, me! how weatherwise women at home get in such matters), took in sail and tacked to leeward on the instant.

"Well, don't be vexed with me, Dick, darling. I didn't mean to tease you. It's so jolly being out together again, isn't it? Just look how the trees are budding, and those dear little crocuses poking up their wee heads out of the mould. I suppose it is quite spring-like in the country."

"H'm, no. Don't think so. Not that I've seen much of it. Those duns have taken good care I shouldn't, and be hanged to them!"

"Dick, dear, don't use bad language, it isn't pretty. And what business have you to be dunned? Why don't you live within your income, sir?—and how much is it for this time?"

Kate thought she had put the question now very lightly and pleasantly; and she stretched out her hand to give a pleasant little pat to the neck of Dick's steed at the same time. Still the young man's brow lowered ominously, and his voice was peevish, if not angry.

"How much! I'm sure I don't know. Clive has been seeing about it, and adding the bills together. I don't know how they mount up. They will do it; and as to living within one's income—if you were not a baby, you'd know it was a simple impossibility. Just try it for yourself some day, that's all."

"But, Dick, dear, two hundred and twenty pounds a—"

"Two hundred and twenty fiddlesticks! Why, it's a mere flea-bite; just enough for men to expect you to live like a gentleman instead of a pauper, and not enough to do it upon. Why, how much do you think wine alone comes to?"

"I suppose it depends on how much you drink," said Kate, doubtfully. "Mamma and I get through rather more than two bottles a week when we are quite alone."

"Two or three! But that shows the absurdity of women trying to regulate men's expenses. Why, every fellow that comes to supper with you expects to drink a bottle to himself; and not rubbish, mind you; no half-crown sherry or gooseberry champagne! A fellow would be cut pretty sharp who tried on that sort of game at Oxford; and then there are cigars, and horses, and—"

"But how do poor men manage, Dick?—poor clergymen's sons, who haven't got the money for these things, and can't get it?"

"Manage! They don't manage. No one ever could."

"But what do they do, then?"

"Run into debt, or lick other men's plates, or starve. Don't ask such absurd questions, Kate."

Barometer again falling! Kate held her peace, and looked away to where the Serpentine was sparkling between the leafless trees like a line of silver light. There had been a gentle rain in the morning, which had left the grass dewed over by myriads of tiny diamonds, and made the loose brown earth of the Ride smell fresh and sweet as a newly-plowed field. The sun was shining brightly on all the gilding and glitter of the Albert Memorial; but Kate's eyes were dazzled with something besides sunshine, and her heart was very heavy. If Dick—poor Dick!—would not do justice to himself, how could she expect the world to do it for him?

There were plenty of girls crossing and recrossing her, chatting and laughing with their cavaliers, as they leaned over the saddle-bow; or going at a long sweeping canter, with curls and habit fluttering in the breeze: girls with brothers too, perhaps, and yet who looked so happy. Kate had felt just as happy as they an hour ago, and now she had to wink away a furtive tear, as she put her horse to a canter also, and scudded along with the brave endeavor to shake off a lump of care lying, stone-like, somewhere very near the brim of her young heart.

For some moments she and Dick swept along the Ride like a breeze; and then, when they were almost abreast of the Powder Magazine, her brother pulled up with a jerk, and signed to her to do so likewise. She looked up at him, flushed and panting, her big, brown eyes brighter than usual, her body thrown well back, and her small hands resting on her knee, as the horse's mane almost swept her breast in the suddenness of his check.

Some one, a solitary pedestrian, wandering somewhat aimlessly among the trees, stopped to look after her, and thought to himself, "What a glorious picture of youth, and health, and innocent happiness!"

"Kittie," said Dick, abruptly, "you'll talk over my lady, won't you? I can't really go through another of these scenes; and you can always get your way, you know. Eh? will you?"

"But what about, dear?"

"About! why, about the money, of course. Say four hundred pounds, or even five hundred; a fellow must have it if he's to go back to Oxford at all, and it's just as well given sooner as later. My mother puts me out so when she begins to cry, and all that sort of thing, that I can't reason with her; but if she'll pay it all now, I'll make any amount of promises to hold in hard for the rest of the time. You tell her so—eh?"

"But you have promised so often, Dick, dear—and then" (hurriedly, lest her hero should be displeased) "mother may not have it to give. Five hundred pounds, did you say? Dick, I am almost sure she has not. She was saying only yesterday that she had run very short this quarter."

"Can't she sell out something?"

"Dick, I didn't mean to tell you, but the lawyer was very angry with her for selling out last time for you. They said it was not fair to the other boys. You know that though everything was left to her, it was only for life, and—"

Dick interrupted her by an impatient exclamation, and a cut at his horse's flanks, which made the injured animal jump and bound from side to side in a manner rather unpleasant to Kate, whose own steed was spirited and easily frightened.

"What possessed my father to make such a will?" he cried, indignantly. "It is a shameful injustice. Just to think of a fellow of my age utterly dependent on his mother—obliged to go to her for every sixpence, and screwed and cramped and lectured like a baby! Kate, it's unbearable; can't you see it is? How am I ever to settle in life, or anything, at this rate? I don't believe any one was ever so persistently ill-treated and sat upon in all this life."

Dick's blue eyes grew quite moist at the picture of his own wrongs, while Kate's throat swelled sympathetically. Verily and indeed, love is blind. This young lady, so keen for the weaknesses and absurdities of the world in general, would have given anything for a cool thousand

or so, to indulge her darling in this. Up in her mind rose a sudden remembrance of a certain eight hundred pounds left to her by an aunt some years back, and which would be at her own disposal when she was twenty-one—in two years time.

Dick wondered, half angrily, why the smiles and color rushed so brightly to her face, till she turned to him, her eyes shining gladly.

"Why, Dick, there is Aunt Delia's money. That would more than set you up—the money she left me, you know."

"You silly child! and do you think I'd rob you? Besides, it isn't yours to give—till you're of age."

"I know that; but, Dick, people lend money on security; and that would be security, wouldn't it? Now please don't laugh at me. I'm sure it would be."

"My dearest Kittie, you're a good little girl—the best lot in the family; but even if any one were willing to lend me money on such security, I couldn't agree; all the family would make such a howl, and say I was swindling you."

"That is nonsense, dear. As if you wouldn't give me anything you have if I wanted it! Besides, no one need ever know. I will write whatever you like, and then when I am twenty-one—"

"It wouldn't be legal, Kittie. Not a Jew of the lot would look at your signature."

"Don't go to Jews, then. Ask your friends. Some of them would surely give you their signature, and trust to mine for repayment."

"Humph! it's all very well as far as you are concerned, little woman; but suppose you were to marry, what would your husband say?"

"My husband shall say that everything I do is right, because I do it, or I will have none of him; so there!"

"Well, I don't like the idea, though of course I should pay it you all back, with interest. I should only accept it as a loan" (this very grandly); "but if nothing else turns up, I don't know what to do. I'll ask Clive."

"Oh, Dick, don't! Why him?"

"My dear Kittie, what on earth makes you dislike Clive? He's the best fellow living, and I'm sure I don't know what I should do without him, especially now. I give you my word, Kate, I'm half mad with worry and trouble."

"Worse than the money?" asked Kate, aghast.

"A million times worse."

"Oh, Dick, then that is what Mr. Clive spoke of when he was so rude to me," and Kate blushed again with the vivid remembrance. "I don't want to ask what it is, but—"

"Bother! *That?* Why, that's nothing, only my mother would worry to know where the money had gone, and like a fool I let her get sight of a bill; but that's nothing to you Kate; and for goodness' sake, don't go telling fellows that I confide all my private affairs to you. It makes one look such a consummate ass."

"I thought you did," said Kate, sorrowfully. "I tell you everything, and I fancied you did the same with me."

"And so I do, my dear child—everything that would interest you; but of course there are lots of things which a man doesn't discuss with his women-folk. If you were not such an innocent little goose, you wouldn't say such things. No, no—this is something much worse. I declare sometimes I wish she were at the bottom of the sea; and yet when I see her, she's so pretty and coaxing, I get more entangled than ever."

"*She!*" said Kate, reddening again, and more deeply still, as she edged a little away, and her voice took an altered tone. "Who are you speaking of?"

[N. B.—Grammar is not always the strong point of our well-educated young Englishwomen.]

"No one you need prim up your mouth at, my child. A girl as respectable, as far as character goes, as yourself, every whit; but who has unfortunately taken a fancy to your humble servant."

"I don't understand you, Dick," said Kate, still speaking very coldly. For the first time her brother's tone grated on the young lady's ear. "How do you know she likes you?"

"She says so, Kittie."

"Then you must have told her you liked her first. Women never take the initiative in these things."

"Perhaps I did. When girls are bewitchingly pretty, men are apt to make fools of themselves about them."

"But why fools? Dick" (a little impatiently), "do speak plainly. Do you mean that you are engaged, or—don't go on in that way."

"Can you keep a secret, Kittie?"

"Of course I can, if it will help you."

"Swear!"

"Nonsense, Dick! Isn't my word enough?"

"Well, then, the fact is, I've gone and tumbled into an offer of marriage; and goodness only knows if I shan't be in for a breach of promise case when I try to back out."

"Back out!" cried Kate, pale with bewilderment. "Break your word, do you mean? but how—why should you?"

"Why! Because I couldn't marry her, even if I wished it, which I'm not quite such a fool as to do; not when I'm away from her, at any rate. Kate, don't stare at me in that codfish fashion. It would be utter ruin and annihilation to a man far beneath me. Do you know what the devil she is?"

"Tell me," said Kate, paler still; but Dick had no time. They were just wheeling round the corner of the Powder Magazine; and coming up to meet them from the ride along the north side of the Serpentine was a stout, red-faced old gentleman, who reined in the well-built cob on which he was mounted and greeted Dick with an explosive exclamation of surprise and wrath.

It was Lord Lovegoats!

CHAPTER VI.

A PROUD WOMAN.

WHEN Bernard Clive asked that question of the widowed lodger at Mrs. Spinks's, which we have recorded in the last chapter but one, the expression on his face denoted a want of admiration for the charms of No. 2, Alma Terrace, which would assuredly have offended the proprietress of that dwelling, and which even brought a glow of color into the pale face of the woman he was addressing. "What! leave us for this hole!" said the elevated lines on the lawyer's forehead; and Mrs. Grey, taking her hands out of his grasp, answered very quietly:

"I left Woodleigh because circumstances gave me no alternative, Mr. Clive; and I came here, first, because the poverty of the place suited my means; and next, because I wished to be out of reach of acquaintances and society which I had no longer the power or desire to keep up."

She spoke with great dignity. Tall and strong as was Bernard Clive, this large, fair woman, with the regal figure and noble brow, was an equal match for him—a far better match than poor little impulsive Kate Bellew.

"I have offended you," he said, quickly. "Forgive me, and tell me how—by coming here, or by what I said?"

"By neither; nor have you offended me. I never take offense where it is not meant; and I am sure you would not mean it."

"Thank you. You do me justice in that."

"But I should like to know how you found me out."

"In the simplest manner possible. I saw you come out of the governess's agency, in Harley Street, and—"

"It was you then!"

"On the other side of the way? Yes, and you eluded me very skillfully, but I went—"

"Forgive my interrupting you again, Mr. Clive, but, seeing that I eluded you—as you say—was it right to follow me and find out what you saw I wished to keep secret?"

Again he felt the rebuke, mildly as it was given. This quiet, graceful woman, with the grand blue eyes and gentle voice, had of a certainty the art of making herself minded.

"I do not know it was right," he answered, flushing; "but you must allow that it was as natural to follow and seek out a friend for whom one cares very much and truly, as it seemed unnatural for that friend to first desert a home where all valued, and then avoid a friend who had never offended her."

He meant to rebuke this time; but she hardly seemed to heed, and only asked:

"Then they gave you my address at the institution? Yet how could they when—"

"When they only knew where your letters were to be addressed? Mrs. Grey, it is as plain that you are not a lawyer as that I am. Do you think that was not clue enough? After finding out the pastrycook mentioned, to find out the hours at which A. Z. usually called for her letters was simple enough, and merely entailed a few fibs and a mild attack of indigestion."

She smiled—very little, but it was for the first time, and he was glad to see it—as she asked:

"How?"

"By the amount of leathery buns and rancid pastry which had to be consumed while extracting the desired information. It is fortunate I have a good constitution."

"I could almost wish you had not, Bernard," she said, smiling still, though sadly. "Do not go on. You have played the detective, and succeeded—to what end?"

"To this, that never having given you cause to distrust

me”—and he laid emphasis on the pronoun—“I can ask you to trust me now, and allow me to assist you as a friend may. I am a lazy fellow, Mrs. Grey; laziness agrees with me; but I can be active sometimes if I try very hard. Witness my exertions in the last twenty-four hours!”

“Have you told them—at Woodleigh—about finding me?” she asked.

“No,” he said, gravely; “I may have a thirst for information on my own account, but I shouldn’t dream of sharing it without your permission. When I was a little boy I always went into a corner and ate my cake all by my own self. I didn’t call all the others round and divide it among them, like good little Tommy in the story-book.”

The grave, fair face looked up at him, laughing now.

“Yes,” she said, “I know you!”

“Do you? I almost feared you did not.”

“I know you guessed the reason of my leaving Woodleigh so abruptly.”

“I think I did. Shall I tell you my guess?”

“No,” she said, decisively.

“As you like. Is that reason—supposing that I guess it—impossible to get over?”

“Quite impossible. Bernard, do not speak of it any more. Believe me, *this*—” and she laid her hand with a simple but touching gesture on the streamers of her widow’s-cap, which had fallen on her bosom—“is not an empty mockery with me.”

“Is it that you despise the new love or—”

“Despise! Oh, no,” she interrupted, “but I pity it because it is given to one who has no capacity for loving left.”

“Then you mean that nothing would induce you to marry again?”

“That is what I mean—yes.”

“And you are so sure of this that you would even fly from the offer of love, however hearty and reverent?”

“Yes,” she said, steadily, “and farther than I have done if necessary.”

“Mrs. Grey,” said Clive, as steadily and with a keen quick glance, “if you had been as sure as you think, you

would have stayed still. Flight is a confession of weakness, not strength."

He had meant to confound her, but he was mistaken. She met his glance with the patient smile of sad experience, and answered:

"In most cases—yes. Not in this."

"Do you know," he said, bending forward and speaking with a touching appealingness, very different to his usual half-languid, half-sarcastic manner, "the sort of love you are rejecting?—how passionate it is, how humble, and how little would content it?—even friendship—friendship and a little of that kindness which you know so well how to show."

The sad blue eyes filled suddenly, and she put out her hand to stop him.

"Pray, pray be silent, Bernard. You do no good, and are only paining me cruelly."

"Do you think of the cruel pain you have given, and not to one only?"

"I do—indeed I do; but it is unavoidable. Should I have acted as I have done, if I had not?"

He was silent.

"It would have broken my heart, if that had not been done long ago," she went on, sorrowfully.

Still he did not answer, and his eyes were fixed on the ground.

"Bernard," she said, in her former tone of grave, kindly dignity, "let us leave this subject now and forever. I have gone through much trouble, and am preparing to go through more. I have left a happy and a peaceful resting-place, and contented myself with this"—looking round the cheerless little room—"to escape from that one thing. Do not bring it on me again. Remember, you have come to me this time against my will. If you would come again with it, it must be on my own terms, and with the strict understanding that unless they are complied with our intercourse must be brought to an end."

There was no mistaking the decision of the tone. Bernard Clive, experienced in women and their ways as a lawyer and a man of the world can hardly fail to be, felt

that this one was in earnest, and that if he would retain her friendship and aid her by his, it must be by complying with the rules she had laid down. In two moments' thought he had weighed the *pros* and *cons*: in two more he had decided for the former.

"If that is really your wish I must obey it; but if I do, you will on your side promise to treat and trust me as a real friend, a brother if you will?"

"A friend, most certainly. I am afraid I do not hold with self-made brothers for women in my position. You don't mind my saying so?"

"On the contrary, I respect you for it. You are more sensible than I; though you needn't be afraid. Having given my word I shall keep it, both in the letter and spirit. Is the bargain made?"

For all reply she gave him her hand—not a very small one, but purely white and perfectly shaped as though cut out of alabaster by the hand of a Phidias. He held it in his a moment, but only a moment. He had sense enough to have learned her character by heart; and the friendly clasp seemed to have given her comfort, for glancing with a smile at the long-neglected tea-things, she said:

"And now let me ring for some hot tea for you. This must have all got cold while we have been talking."

"Have you not had your own?"

"No, I did not care for it then. I do now."

"Then by all means let us have it. It will seem home-like to see you pouring out tea again."

And Mrs. Spinks, after having very unwillingly answered the bell, replenished the tea-pot, and left the room with an indignant bounce.

Another half-hour of quiet, rather sad conversation, questions and answers on both sides; and Clive rose to go, incited to do so by his hostess looking at her watch, and saying, with a frank simplicity which disarmed offense:

"Bernard, I must turn you out. The good people here go to bed very early, and as I am not in the habit of receiving visitors, we must not shock their propriety."

"You are the most discreet matron I ever saw," he said, smiling as he got up, and then wondered to see the rush of violent, painful crimson which covered her face; "and when may I see you again?"

"Any day next week."

"This is only Wednesday! Well"—with a shrug of his shoulders—"if sooner may not be, I will call on Sunday."

"Sunday afternoon then; I go to church morning and evening."

His eyes twinkled as he saw that she would not have him in the evenings; but he only said:

"And you are bent on carrying out your resolutions? How I wish I could dissuade you! Fancy *you* companion to some vicious old woman!"

"Old women are not necessarily vicious; and even if my one were, I might do her some good. Viciousness sometimes comes from unsoftened trouble; but troubles sympathized with must soften by degrees. Yes, I am quite resolved, Bernard; and remember, you have promised to let me know if you hear of anything. Do not mind if it sounds humble. I have no pride of *that* sort."

"I promise;" and then he took her hand again and went away, nearly tumbling over Mrs. Spinks, who *happened* to be brushing some crumbs off the oilcloth just outside the parlor door. Mrs. Grey did not cry again when she was left alone. She was not a woman given to crying in general. Deep grief seldom finds vent in lamentations, and Mrs. Grey had known grief heavier than most women. You could not look at her, and her face was as calm and unruffled as that of a marble statue—you could not see her pass, and her step was firmer and more upright than many girls'—without feeling, there goes one who has in very truth walked barefoot over the red-hot plowshares of pain, and borne away the wounds deep scored into her woman's flesh. She never spoke of her chief troubles. They yet bled too freshly to bear uncovering even to a kindly eye; and had it been otherwise, hers was not a nature which could find solace in speech; but those that knew her intimately

(they were not more than two or three) knew that simultaneously with the loss of her husband had come other trials, greater almost in one sense: trials which had driven her from home and friends, and obliged her to struggle, poor and unaided, with a churlish world. Not as churlish perhaps to her as to others. There are people who meet courtesy and kindness wherever they go, without ever appearing to claim it, or seeming aware that they are treated other than the rest of the world. Mrs. Grey was one of them: There was something in the unruffled dignity of her look and manner which inspired respect—something in the beautiful womanliness of her face and appearance which won her love and confidence; and the world gave her both. A noble woman in many things, with a large, sweet nature, wonderfully guileless and placid; with a wide benevolence and an unflurried gentleness and gravity, unspeakably refreshing to a tired mind, or an overworked body. Not a faultless woman by any means—else not womanly—but one who had marred her life by a great, grave error, of which even now she was hardly conscious, so rooted was it in the nature to which she was born. *Pride!*

There are different sorts of pride, some common and easily distinguishable, some uncommon and very hard to find out. Mrs. Grey's was of the latter sort; and was rather a close mantle of reserve which folded round her whole being; and at the first breath of serious wrong in those she loved bore her away, bleeding inwardly, but sternly and impenetrably silent, out of their reach even for penitence and atonement altogether and forever. Do not imagine that she was a touchy woman, or quick to offense. She was not. Anger, indeed, in the ordinary sense of the word, was not in her nature, and when she witnessed it in another she had a way of opening her calm blue eyes with a look of mild surprise and distaste which added fuel to flame with a person of fiery disposition. She was slow in many things, especially slow to suspicion of evil in those about her; but once her mind had been driven to accept that suspicion, it was equally

slow to relinquish it, and still more so to believe that others could think evil of her. Nay, when that other was one who *knew* her, whom she loved, or in whom she confided, the cruelty and injustice smote on that silent heart of hers a blow for which there was no healing. She could not defend herself; she was too proud. She could not even stoop to seek an explanation; and so there was nothing for her but to put the sinner away and go from him, broken-hearted, perhaps, but unrebuking and unexcusing, saying: "I forgive you," and finding, as Rochefoucauld says, a charm in that word to condone a lifelong horror and a shuddering avoidance.

This was a fault, and no light one; a fault which had been punished with excess of bitterness, and which was yet quite incurable; for how prescribe for a disease unless you be aware of it? And Mrs. Grey, while repenting herself sorrowfully of many a lighter sin, was in utter and entire ignorance of this.

Mrs. Grey—having decided, of her own gentle discretion, that a large latitude must be made for the ignorance of social customs natural to the lower orders, and having, to avoid the very faintest breath of scandal, dismissed her old friend at the primitively early hour of half-past eight—never dreamed that the mischief she had affably gone out of her way to avoid was already done; and did not even awake to the consciousness that something was amiss with her landlady, till after two days' persistent surliness and inattention. Then, indeed, with a kindly desire to find some excuse for the misconduct, she, instead of rebuking, cast about in her mind for a reason for it, and inquired whether Mr. Spinks was out of work, or whether they had received any bad news of the daughter who was in service.

"Out o' work, m'm?" said the landlady, irately, and resenting the blandly-spoken words; "no, but it's double work as he'll be 'avin' to do if I've to give up lettin' these rooms, as I expect I'll be druv to if things don't halter one o' these days. No, m'm, I ain't 'ad no bad news o' my gurril, nor am like to without she goes to the bad, as is a wonder more gurrils doesn't, with their missuses a-settin' of 'em sich examples."

"Mrs. Spinks," said the widow, mildly (she was getting tired), "I am sorry your daughter's mistress is not a nice person. You should try and find the girl another. Shut the door behind you when you go out, if you please; you left it open last time."

And Mrs. Spinks went out, and shut the door, actually silenced; and joined Spinks, who sat mildly smoking and remonstrating in the chimney-corner.

"You mark my word for it, 'e'll be comin' to-night agin," said Mrs. Spinks, energetically.

But night came on, and another night still, and Bernard Clive not making his appearance, the good woman began to feel an aggrieved sense of disappointment creeping over her, and to think that it might be possible, despite all that had passed, for her lodger to be as uninterestingly respectable and well-conducted as any of the other residents in Alma Terrace, S. W.

Judge, then, of her annoyance when, just before retiring to rest on Saturday night, Mrs. Grey said in her softest and quietest tones:

"By the way, Mrs. Spinks, my week is up to-day; so I may as well pay you, and give you a week's warning. I shall not require the rooms after next Tuesday or Wednesday."

"Ma'am!" stammered Mrs. Spinks, drawing back in almost ludicrous dismay, and looking at the silver in that smooth, white palm as if it were a nest of vipers to sting. "You—you don't mean as you're a-thinkin' on leaving, m'm?"

"Next week. Yes, Mrs. Spinks. Will you count the money, and receipt it, if you please."

There was no mistaking that tone. Mrs. Spinks took the money, and began to fumble with it nervously.

"I'm sure, m'm, this is most unlooked. I 'ope as you 'aven't no complaint to make, which if it's anythink I can remedy—an' that chimney do smoke, I know—I'm sure me and Spinks—"

"Thank you, Mrs. Spinks. I have no complaint to make. If I have not been quite as comfortable as I could wish, it is doubtless because you have not been accus-

tomed to lady-lodgers. Is that the receipt? Thank you. Good night."

And the lady rose and retired, leaving Mrs. Spinks ready to curse her folly in having been uncivil to so quiet and regular a lodger.

The good woman was gone to chapel on the following day when Clive arrived, according to promise; and going straight into the parlor, greeted his friend with the question:

"You got my letter yesterday?"

"Yes, and I thank you for it. It was most kind of you to recommend me."

"Kind! Oh, to Lady Beatrice! Well, I think it was; but remember I only hinted at you—said you might think of it. I am not at all sure you would like her."

"Why not? You tell me she is young and kind-hearted; from her name, I presume her to be a lady—three very pleasant qualifications. The question is" (but she looked royally calm as she said it) "whether she would like me."

"I do not think there is much doubt of that—do you? Only tell me, why shouldn't you go to the other?—three nice young girls really needing a mother's care, and no one to interfere with—"

"That is out of the question"—and she spoke with something like agitation—"I will not go where there are young girls, or girls at all. I should not think it right."

"In Heaven's name, why?"

CHAPTER VII.

FLINT AND STEEL.

“OFFERED it! Of course she offered it. You don’t think for one moment that I could have asked her for it, do you?”

“To tell you the truth, my dear fellow, I did not think for one moment that you could have *accepted* it. Do I understand that you have?”

“Well, hang it all, Clive! it’s hard if a fellow mayn’t accept a loan from his own sister, and when it’s forced on him too. I declined roundly at first, but she was bent on having her own way; and after all, you see, she doesn’t want, and can’t touch, it now, or for the next three years; and before then I shall have paid her back, and with interest. I insisted on that. I said, ‘Understand, Kittie, if I borrow the use of this money now, you must receive five per cent. for it.’ Oh! I assure you I made a point of that.”

Clive’s lip curled satirically. He and Dick Bellew were sitting over their wine in the Bellews’ dining-room after dinner; and some men might have been offended at the look of faint contempt which sat so undisguisedly on his keen, sharply-cut features; but poor Dick was too much occupied with himself, with thumping the table in an authoritative manner, and drawing himself up with an air of dignified rectitude, to pay heed to his friend for the moment; and when the latter spoke, his face wore its usual impassive expression.

“I have no doubt that argument weighed with your

sister, only—it is as well to look at the dark side of things, you know, Bellew—what is the good of paying five per cent. interest, if you can't return the principal?"

"But of course I shall return it."

"When?"

"Oh! by degrees. I shall have got settled in something by that time. If only that old uncle of mine would get me my commission, I—"

"My dear fellow, *you* could no more live on your pay as an officer than fly. As to paying between four and five hundred pounds out of it, the notion is simply absurd. Banish it."

Dick writhed disconsolately. He was leaning back in an armchair, with his back turned to the table on which the dessert still remained, and his legs stretched out to the fender. The red firelight, leaping up, flickered and flared on his pale face, ruffled hair, and the strange little lines on his brow.

"It's—it's deuced hard," he muttered, tugging pettishly at the ends of his fair moustache. "Whatever did my father mean by making such a will? It was a shame!"

"*De mortuis nil nisi bonum*," said Clive, looking up from the walnuts which he was peeling with delicately lazy fingers, while he talked; "I suppose your father wished to insure the rest of his family against beggary."

"Oh! you're a nice comfort for a man. Can't you tell me any one who would lend the money on Kate's security? You and she don't seem to hit it off well; but I give you my word that it's safe to be handed over the very day she gets it."

"I don't in the least doubt it."

"And as to interest, of course I'd pay that regularly—five, six, even eight, or ten per cent., paid up every quarter—eh? Come, Clive, I know you havn't. it yourself; but you must know some one who has."

"Possibly I do; but I should be doing you a very unfriendly act if I suggested any one. Depend on it, you would not thank me for it later."

"I shouldn't! Why not?"

"Simply because I should be assisting you to take a

mean advantage of your sister's unthinking generosity. What, Bellew!—the lazy blue eyes suddenly flashing out like the glitter of a naked sword—"you, a man and able to earn for yourself if you chose, a man with a widowed mother and half a dozen little brothers and sisters, and who ought to be the prop and stay of the whole family, rob a helpless girl of half the little money which, for aught you know, may be her sole dependence in time to come! Bah! if I were to help you in such a selfish, cowardly deed, I should despise myself as thoroughly as—"

"As *me*, I suppose you mean. Say it out. Oh, pray don't mince words!" cried Dick, angrily; and then the door opened, and Kate stood in the opening, with the lamplight on her white dress and brow, and on the knot of wax-like, sweet-smelling narcissus, nestled among the rich-colored wavy coils of her beautiful hair.

She was a quick girl, and at the first glance saw that something more than a difference of opinion was amiss between the two young men. Even Clive's swift change from fiery scorn and indignation to languid absorption in a walnut, was not instantaneous enough to escape her notice; and Dick's face, always ready to take every shade of emotion, was red and quivering with angry mortification. Clive "rose" to the occasion.

"Here is your sister, Bellew," he said, "come to see why we sit quarreling over politics in place of responding to the invitation of that pretty melody from above. I assure you I was enjoying it even here, Miss Bellew."

Kate did not believe him, and barely accorded a smile of civility to what she mentally pronounced to be "humbug."

"I was looking for you, Dick, dear," she said, turning to her brother. "I want to know about going to the concert to-morrow, because William must order the carriage this evening. Did you get the tickets?"

She had gone up to her brother and laid her hand on his shoulder, with a little caressing gesture which said, "I know that abominable man is quarreling with you and making you angry; but *I* am here now, and with me on your side he can't go on."

Dick got up rather irritably; but when does a man appreciate, or even understand, these little unspoken *finesses* of love, if they come from a mother or sister? Let it be a sweetheart indeed—but that is quite different.

"What a tease you are, Kittie!" he said. "Yes, I got them; but I don't think they were for to-morrow. They're in my desk—no, you can't get them. I suppose I must go myself. Are you ready, Clive?"

He was following his sister to the door, but Clive stopped him with a hand on his shoulder. Kate tripped on all unconscious: and the young lawyer spoke in a very low tone:

"Bellew, you must excuse my plain speaking just now. I am sure you can see the matter for yourself in the same light. Look at that child"—nodding his head in the direction of the white dress fluttering so lightly upstairs—"you would never go and use her poor little money. I know you better than that."

"Then I suppose you know that I am competent to take care of my sister for myself, thank you," retorted Dick; "she's rather more to me, I hope, than she is to you!"

"Rather!" said Clive, lightly. "Except as your sister, I was not indeed aware that she was anything to me."

"Then don't stand up for her against me. I asked you to do me a service. If you won't, I must go to some one who will, that's all. Let us go upstairs."

"One moment! You imply that I have interfered with your conduct. I acknowledge it, and apologize for the impertinence. Now we will go up if you like, and I will take the opportunity of bidding your mother good-bye. I must be off before breakfast to-morrow."

"Going!" cried Dick, turning around, his temper quelled in dismay. "What's that for? I say, Clive, you're not going to quarrel with me, are you?"

"I hope not."

"I suppose you're offended because I lost my temper just now," said Dick, half sulkily; "but, you see, a fellow

don't like to be dictated to, and told he's a— By Jove! you know that's too much"—heating anew at the thought—"and if it had been any other man, I'd—but there! I say, Clive"—dropping again into the minor key—"you don't mean it, I know, and of course you can see for yourself how it is. Don't go and quarrel with a fellow because he can't take your advice in one matter."

"I always mean all that I say," said Clive, coolly. "I've already told you, however, that what I said was unjustifiable. As to quarreling, that is absurd. I had intended going to-morrow. You forget *I've* got my living to earn."

"I wish to heaven I could earn a living anywhere," said Dick, despondently. "Look at my old screw of an uncle rolling in money, and won't even shell out to— Ugh! I'm the most unlucky beggar on the face of the earth."

He was standing up under the gas-lamp, his shoulders humped up, his hands in his pockets, his light hair rumpled, a thousand little lines and wrinkles marring with a strange network the young, boyish face; the bitten ends of his fair moustache drooping raggedly over the weak, nervous mouth: a pitiful picture of wasted youth and anticipated old age, unconscious of its own dishonor. Clive, looking down on him, in the full vigor of his strength and manliness, had something of compassion in the gaze. His lips moved with what looked like "Poor wretch!" but the words themselves were inaudible; and just then the two younger girls' voices were heard upon the landing above.

"I should so have liked to go," said Eve. "Fancy a month at Mentone now, when it is so damp and chilly here! Dr. Parish said it would do me more good than all those nasty tonics; and the Saltrams are so nice, and would have treated me quite as a grown-up— Oh Madgie! isn't it hard?"

"Awfully," said Madgie's hearty voice; "but mamma says you would want a regular outfit; and then the journey! She can't afford it. I suppose she has to give Dick so much."

"The Saltrams will never ask me again," sighed Eve. "If only we were not so poor! It is well for you who never feel ill"—and then the two girlish voices died away, and the men passed into the drawing-room.

Later in the evening, Kate was just finishing a song which Lady Margaret had asked for, when Clive's voice said in her ear:

"Will you give me ten minutes' conversation after that is done, Miss Bellew?"

Kate stared.

"Certainly," she said, frigidly, and with an amount of astonishment in her manner which caused Clive to add rather pointedly:

"It is about your eldest brother, or I should not presume on such a request."

"About Dick!" said Kate, quickly, and all her frigidity went. They were alone in the back drawing-room, where the piano stood. Heavy ruby-colored curtains draped the arch which divided them from the rest of the company; and through the opening one saw a bright glow of lamp and firelight: Dick sprawling on the sofa; his mother sitting near him, with her cup of tea perilously tilted on her knee; and the juvenile trio playing Bezique at the centre table. It all looked very bright and comfortable. Even Lady Margaret's somewhat shabby black velvet gown assumed a regal gloss and richness in the friendly firelight; and Eve's frost-white face and crocus-colored hair came out in Pre-Raphaelite relief against the bowl of dark green ferns behind her. And yet there were shadows and skeletons unbidden lurking behind all that glow and brightness which made the inner room look dark in comparison, and barely threw more than a refracted gleam on Kate's white dress and shining eyes, as she turned, her pretty dimpled hands still resting on the keys, her face upraised in eager, half-resentful inquiry, to the tall dark figure of the man leaning with folded arms upon the instrument in front of her.

"What about Dick?"

"Perhaps you will think me very meddling and intrusive in saying anything about your brother to you,"

Clive answered, in the same low tone; "may I, therefore, ask you to believe that it is as his friend, and because I like him somewhat, and take as much interest in him as I can spare from my own concerns for any one, that I do so."

"I know Dick considers you his friend," said Kate, her fingers tingling. "No one can help liking him that knows him, and then you are a sort of cousin—of course you can say what you like."

"And you will kindly regard it as said in confidence?" He did not smile at Kate's answer, and she stared again.

"*In confidence*, Mr. Clive?"

"Exactly. Your mother has, I believe, confidence in me. I simply ask you to have it with me in a matter respecting Dick only, and for Dick's sake."

"If it is for Dick's sake—" said Kate, annoyed, but glancing wistfully at the reclining figure in the outer room—"I suppose— Well, Mr. Clive, what is it?"

He did smile this time. Her reluctance to admit him to anything like intimacy, and her dread of refusing lest she might prejudice Dick, were too childishly manifest; and she saw the smile, misconstrued it, and disliked him more for it.

"Dick is very heavily in debt, as you know, Miss Bellew," said Clive; "I believe it comes to four hundred and eighty pounds; and where it has gone, except in folly and—"

"Please don't talk about Dick's follies," said Kate, sharply. "He mayn't be as prudent and economical as an old miser of ninety. I dare say he isn't. I shouldn't like him if he were. Please go on. I know all about his debts. Perhaps you don't know that he is going to pay them all off at once."

"With your money," said Clive. "Yes, he has told me so; and I am hoping to induce you to change your mind."

"Change my mind! What on?"

"And to retract your offer of assisting him with that money your aunt left you."

Kate was speechless with surprise and indignation.

"You propose to lend it to him," said Clive, calmly; "have you ever thought how he is to repay it, or when?"

"Of course not. Why, Mr. Clive, I—"

"He has now the same allowance as most young men in his position—much more than I had in my day—and amply sufficient for every reasonable want—"

"Dick says he can't do upon it, so I think you must be mistaken," said Kate, rebelliously.

"Dick has proved he can't. He has already got into debt three times; and your mother has cleared him with great difficulty, by crippling herself, and depriving her younger children of their just wants. He is now in debt again, and she cannot help him. She is not young, and has already exposed herself to considerable blame and anxiety by outrunning her means for this one son. Do you justify your brother in this, Miss Bellew?"

"No!" cried Kate, with a sort of passionate sob; "I—Oh, poor mamma! Of course, I know how hard it is for her; but I am going to pay this. He calls it lending, but it is not. I never want it back. I give it him. No one need trouble about his repaying it—or be afraid of my changing my mind," said Kate, haughtily; "I don't know anything about law, but I would swear or write anything now, and directly I am of age—but surely a lady's word is enough!"

"Not always," said Clive, with perfect coolness. "I am afraid business men would, for example, hardly be satisfied with it in the present case. You forget that, though you call this money yours, it is really not yours, but only in trust for you till you are of age; and if you were to marry it would (unless secured to your private use in the marriage settlement) belong to your husband, and be at his disposal."

"My husband!" cried Kate, half laughing; "one would think he were in existence to hear you and Dick. How do you know I shall ever marry?"

"Judging from the utter want of common-sense or prudence among most of my fellow-men, I should think it likely," replied Clive, in the same dry manner. "Also, as I should imagine you specially unfitted for a very poor

man's wife, I could venture to predict your husband will be exceptionally hard up; and I should like to know how you will feel when obliged to choose between helpless babies crying for bread-and-butter, and a big brother crying for extravagancies which he would never have got into if you had not insisted on defraying them for him? You are fond of your brother now, Miss Bellew. Do you think you would be less fond of your husband and children then?"

"Dick is here," said Kate, furiously scarlet by now, "and—Mr. Clive, people don't generally speak of these sort of things to—"

"To young ladies? No, I grant you, it is the general practice to tie their legs and bandage their eyes, before setting them off to thread their way among the precipices and quicksands of life. Society has so decreed. I agree with society in most things—"

"I don't," said Kate, "I think it is great nonsense."

"But in this case I am speaking as a man of business to a novice. Have I affected your decision?"

"No," said Kate, promptly, "of course not. You talk of contingencies and probabilities, and would like me to behave cruelly and unkindly to darling Dick now, because twenty years hence there is some remote chance of some one else wanting the money which he wants at present. I may be a novice in business, but I know that is—Oh, please don't say any more. I can't think why you, who call yourself Dick's friend, should be taking so much trouble to harm him."

"I don't suppose you can," observed Clive. "Pray sit still a moment longer, Miss Bellew. My ten minutes are not out yet. It is because I call myself Dick's friend that I want to prevent you from harming him."

"ME!" Dusk as it was, he saw the indignant flash in her bright eyes at this crowning injury.

"Yes, you. I have appealed to you for your own sake and your mother's, but I had better have spoken for Dick at once. Why should you, Miss Bellew, take advantage of his extravagance to propose and urge his doing a dirty, dishonorable act, which would lower him

in the eyes of every man of honor? What! you, a lady, with a lady's feelings, and think that *gentlemen* would encourage your brother in taking a girl's money to pay off his debts—and such debts as his! By heavens! if you brought him to such a pitch of meanness, he would never recover it, or cease to reproach you. Every penny you have would follow by degrees, and you would see yourself beggared, and your brother an idle, helpless spendthrift, cut by every man worth knowing, and a prey to the miserable cads who alone would assist him in such an utterly unmanly mode of money-raising. There! I have made you cry, and when you have dried your eyes you will be satisfied with calling me a brute. That is always the way with you young women. However, I can't help it. Please to forgive me. I knew I should do no good, and I've done none. Now I am going, and I dare say you won't shake hands with me, but—"

"Wait one minute," cried Kate, lifting her wet face from the hands in which she had hidden it. "I am not crying; and as to calling you names—but I hope I am not as unjust and discourteous as—"

"As I am, *par exemple*," put in Clive, with a lively recollection of the epithet "pig," as applied to himself on the evening of their first acquaintanceship. "Well, I have heard young ladies use even as strong expressions as 'brute' in regard to people they disliked. But I beg your pardon. Of course, I have no right to suppose you could do so."

It was keen retaliation, and cut to the quick; for Kate remembered too, and with a misery of shame which he was far from guessing, or he had never so spoken. If he could but have thought the words without saying them; or having said them, if he could only have taken them back! But, alas! how little can be taken back in life, and how easy it is to say the things we regret! Verily and indeed, the tongue is "a little fire," and "if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body." The sarcastic retort was hardly out of Clive's lips before he repented it, and was already cursing his own irritated pride, when Kate stood

up flushing and paling like one who has received a stinging blow, but speaking with more dignity than he had supposed her capable of.

"Mr. Clive," she said, looking up at him with very childlike simplicity, "I know what you mean. You heard me say something very foolish to my brother the day you came here. It was wrong of me—hasty and unladylike; but if you are one of a large family, you must know that brothers and sisters often talk in a thoughtless way to each other, and use strong expressions without meaning them, which they would be very sorry to repeat in earnest. If I had not thought it impossible you could remember or lay weight to such a silly speech, I would have apologized for it before, as I do now."

How strangely opposites meet! No two women could be more widely unlike than Kate Bellew and Averil Grey: and yet there was something of the latter's queenliness in the junior's girlish figure as she made her little *amende*. Clive felt it at once, and answered in a more subdued tone than she had ever heard from him:

"It was I who was wrong, and you have rebuked me justly. Of course I know the difference between a hasty word in one's own family and—but it is no use excusing myself; only believe me, if I have disgusted you by my thin-skinned vanity, I have disgusted myself much more."

Kate believed it, indeed. There was a depth of self-contempt in the proud man's tone which moved her own generosity, and as he rose to go she checked him with outstretched hand.

"Let us both forget it, Mr. Clive, and think of my brother instead. What you said about him was dreadful. I had never thought of it in that light. Are you sure you meant it?"

"Every word."

"But what shall I do? His debts must be paid, and I have promised—"

"Will you let me advise you?"

"If you will."

"Tell your brother that you find that what you proposed was impossible, being illegal, and that you would

not be allowed to carry it out. If you will give me your word of honor, Miss Bellew, to do this, and to resist any after effort to induce you to make over part or all of your small property for your brother's use, I will pledge you my word that all he owes at present shall be settled within three months."

"Will you really?" cried Kate, all coldness forgotten in joy—"but how? He told me you could not—"

"Lend him the money? No; I am a poor man myself; but I can manage to procure it for him, and on such conditions as will oblige him to curtail expenses which are ruining him, and force him to exert himself a little, as the eldest son of a widowed mother should be proud to do if he has any manliness in him."

"You are very hard," said Kate, wincing; "I beg your pardon, but I love Dick, and indeed he is manly. You don't know what a dear, good fellow he is. Many young men are extravagant at first."

"And go to ruin in the end, I dare say; but you would hardly call a man hard who would prevent his brother from tumbling over a precipice, even if he had to give him a rough jerk in the effort. Do you know why I care enough about Dick to try to check him? Simply because he has a look of some one I loved—my younger brother, who went to the bad, and—died."

He held out his hand as he spoke—something like a quiver about the stern mouth; and Kate answered, sympathetically:

"I will give you my promise, Mr. Clive, only save Dick."

"Help him to save himself, Miss Bellew; and now thank you for your long patience. We don't get on prettily together"—and he smiled—"but even though you mayn't like me, or I you, we will remember that this is a bargain, and keep to it accordingly."

"And I almost did like him for a moment," said Kate to herself, when he had joined the others. "I am glad he didn't guess it. A hard, discourteous man, whom one can't be kind to. And after all, he is only going to get

the money from some one who will bully poor Dick ; but if it's for Dick's good—and the dear boy is rather idle, though I would never let any one hear me say so."

CHAPTER VIII.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

KATE had given her word, and never dreamed of going back from it; but the task was not an easy one, and she might have remained puzzling over the miserable question, "how to do it," for ever, had not Dick himself assisted her to the solution. Dick was not happy in his mind. Lord Lovegoats had, to quote the young man's own phrase, snubbed the nose off his face on the occasion of their meeting in Hyde Park. Lady Margaret's own nose was quite red from incessant rubbing, and her face wore an irritating expression of despondency, much like the handkerchiefs with broad black borders which some ladies *will* flourish in the world's face, as a sort of outward symbol of the grief they ought to feel; while Clive had said nasty, rude things to him, which slashed up poor Dick's self-love, and made him nervous and petulant. He had not the least idea of going back from his own way, or relinquishing such a tempting windfall as Kate's money; but somehow the idea had lost its first charm, and even perpetual iterations of "Of course it's only a loan, I shall pay it back to her with interest and all that," failed to afford him the moral consolation that might have been expected. It was all very well to say of Clive, "Confound the fellow's impertinence! What right has he to regulate my conduct?" but still the impertinence rankled, and to get rid of the sting and rehabilitate himself in his own eyes, Master Dick took an early opportunity of broaching the subject again to Kate—poor little

Kate!—who for the first time in her life was keeping out of his way, with a guilty sense of being about to injure him in the basest manner, under pretense of doing him good—acting, as she thought to herself with withering scorn, much as people do when they whip children and tell them it is for their good, and that it is much greater pain for them (the executioners) to administer the whipping than for the wretched little victims to receive it. Kate hated this simile, and yet it would occur to her, as it might to you, intelligent reader, if you have ever seen through this solemn humbug with the wonderfully clear eyes of infancy, and resented, either in silent writhings or rebellious answer, the speech which added insult to injury.

I don't think silence was a *forte* of mine in childhood—at least, I always remember getting my floggings in doubles—one for the primary naughtiness, whatever it was, which had to be thus taken out of my poor little flesh, and another for what was termed my impertinence, being a prompt and incredulous retort upon the cold-blooded speechifying with which women, in particular, delight to salt their cat-o'-nine-tails.

Kate hated it, as I have said, and as a matter of course she hated Bernard Clive for having instigated her to so barbarous a proceeding; and yet she never thought of breaking her word once given. Her very heart yearned over Dick, and so she kept out of his way, that she might not be tempted to gratify him at any cost. When on the following day she saw her brother sauntering up to her with his hands in his pockets, and a more jaded look than usual on his face, her heart began to leap in quick impulsive throbs, and she was fain to stoop her head over the bowl of tulips and hyacinths she was arranging, to hide the rush of color to her face.

Dick did not speak at first, but stood looking on in moody silence till Kate, feeling that her face was betraying her, gave him a spray of white, fairy-like bells, and asked him if it wouldn't be a beauty for his button-hole.

"Beauty? H'm! oh, it's well enough," grumbled Dick. "I say, it's fine to be you, with nothing to do or think of but playing with flowers, and that rubbish."

"Can I do anything for you, Dick, dear? and, oh! don't you like to see the flowers set out prettily round you?" said Kate.

Dick grunted again.

"For me? No, of course not. Since you're so clever at twisting flowers about, Katie, you'd better stick to it, and then you'll be able to make swell wreaths and crosses for my grave when I'm in it. I dare say it won't be long first."

"Oh, Dick!" cried Kate, with a quick shudder of pain; and then her native common sense came to her aid, and threw back the shock his words had given her. "How can you talk such nonsense?" she said, with a little wholesome anger.

"Oh, of course it's nonsense to you," said Dick, sulkily. "None of you might care; but I tell you what, it'll come to that some day, if things aren't altered."

It was on the tip of Kate's tongue to say that she supposed it would come to that some day, whether things were altered or not: Nature not being likely to abrogate her law of universal dissolution in favor of Dick Bellew; but the retort, never got farther than the least little sparkle in the corner of her bright eyes. Kate had plenty of mother-wit in her composition, but she would have smothered it all rather than give the tiniest twinge to those she loved, so she controlled herself and said nothing; and Dick took umbrage thereat, as was natural.

"Well, have you nothing to say to-day?" he asked.

"Upon my word, this is a lively house to come home to! A schoolroom full of noisy children, my mother going about with a face like a galvanized gargoyle; and you so abominably rude to my friends, you actually drive them out of the house. Upon my life, it's enough to—but there, it's all of a piece;" and Dick turned on his heel with what he meant for a bitter laugh of derision.

Poor fellow! he had no idea what a delightful subject for a comic paper he would have made; and, fortunately, Kate was too fond of him to see the joke as keenly as she would had it been any one else.

"Dick," she said, gravely, "I did not mean to be rude

to Mr. Clive. He does not like me—he said so,” and the young lady’s cheeks colored high at the remembrance—“so it was not to be expected that I should be very *empresée* to him. Of course, every one has different tastes in girls” (Kate thought here that Mr. Clive’s tastes were very different from the majority of her acquaintances’) “but some people might think it rude to express them in—”

“Did Clive tell you he didn’t like you?” cried Dick, turning round with a laugh which rather hurt Kate. “By Jove! he’s a cool hand—too cool by half sometimes”—and the laugh died out in a sudden frown. “I’m not sorry for some things, that he would go to-day. Those successful fellows haven’t much sympathy for a poor devil who doesn’t know what to do for a sixpence to bless himself with.”

“Dear Dick!” said Kate, coaxingly. “But if you would only take your degree, and settle to—anything, I am sure poor papa’s name, or Uncle Theo., could get you a berth in the—Home Office, for instance.”

“Hang the Home Office! Do you think I want to be tied to a desk all day, Kittie, like a merchant’s clerk?” cried Dick, petulantly. “Let him give me a commission. I’d say ‘Thank you’ then, if you like; and he could do it to-morrow if he would, hang him!”

“But he won’t, Dick, so what is the good of thinking of it! He said he wouldn’t after you refused to go into the Church.”

“The *Church*! That is a good joke. I’d like to see what those old duffers at Oxford would say to it. I wonder Uncle Theo. doesn’t propose himself for a bishopric as well. We should be a nice pair of—”

“Don’t talk in that way, Dick. I hate it,” cried Kate, who knew as much of Lord Lovegoats’s shortcomings as might with propriety filter to the ears of a young lady. “I don’t think you would have made a good clergyman; but you needn’t make yourself out to be like Uncle Theo. because you have been a little wild, and got into debt.”

“I should care deuced little about getting into debt if I could only get out again,” said Dick, candidly: then in

a reverse tone—"Of course it's all nonsense about my taking your money;" and there he came to a pause, waiting to be contradicted, and set right with himself.

Kate, however, disappointed him. Never thinking but that he was in earnest, her heart gave a great bound, and she looked up in nervous silence to see what would follow.

"You might regret offering it, or want it back as soon as you came of age, and before I could give it you," Dick went on, rather crossly; "and though I needn't say I should return it with interest— But of course that was only a joke of yours. We neither of us meant to touch it for my debts," finished up the young man, in a tone whose rising indignation at not being interrupted again savored of the comic.

Very slowly, and with a burning face, Kate answered, her hands busy among a heap of yellow tulip-buds, the sunshine on her drooping head:

"You think it is better not? Y—yes, perhaps it would not do—" and there *she* came to a full stop, silenced by the burst of bitter, incredulous laughter which greeted her faltering words. Ah, dear me! was not Clive to be indeed detested for setting her so detestable a task!

"Wouldn't do!" repeated Dick, scornfully, "Ha! ha! ha! So you've changed your mind already, have you? Upon my word, you're of a prudent nature, my fair sister. It's well I never thought of taking you at your word. I knew too well the worth of a woman's promise; though I must say that it's rather insulting too, and there are not many men who would stand such a reflection on their honor from a bit of a girl. Pray, did you think—"

"No, Dick, no; of course not," stammered poor Kate, without in the least knowing what she was accused of thinking. "Indeed, it's not that; I only thought that other people might say that—I mean that no one would accept such— Oh, Dick! please don't think I want to keep it."

"For Heaven's sake, don't begin to cry!" cried Dick, impatiently. "*That* I can't stand. Of course you want

to keep it. What else? You would have liked to get a cheap name for generosity, but when you came to think—"

"Letter for you, please, sir," said Buttons, opening the door briskly, and with a perfect consciousness that Miss Kate had whisked round to the fire to hide her tears, and that Mr. Dick was walking about in a rage, written in every prim pucker of his innocent countenance. Dick proved the latter by the way he snatched the letter off the tray; and Buttons retired to linger a minute or two on the mat outside the drawing-room door.

"From Clive!" muttered the young man. "Why, what the deuce—" and then he tore it open, and read the penciled note within:

"DEAR BELLEW,—I have just heard of a friend who will be willing to let you have a loan of £500 on your note-of-hand, and under certain conditions arranged beforehand. They are rather hard; but unless you have a better offer, I would advise your looking in at my chambers to-morrow morning between ten and eleven to talk them over."

Kate was looking eagerly, questioningly at her brother, but her glance sank before the triumphant mirth with which he turned on her.

"Well, my dear, you needn't have been in such a dreadful hurry to secure your money-bags. I told you nothing would have induced me to touch them, but I just thought I'd try how much worth there was in your grand offers. Ha! Kate, I'll know who *not* to trust to another time. Perhaps you wouldn't have been in such haste to retract, if you had known that I never intended to accept your sham generosity. There are plenty of people willing to lend me twice as much if I would only ask for it. And listen to this—" and he read aloud the first part of the letter, ending with "There, Kittie! I hope you see other people have more confidence in your brother than you. Where's my hat? Oh, don't make any protestations; I'm sick of talk. What the deuce have I done with my hat? Be so kind as to tell my mother I shan't dine at home. I'm going to the club. No, I don't know when I'll be back. What is that to any one? My family are

not so pleasant or agreeable that I should stay at home from morning till night. Oh! there's my hat. What the deuce is it doing there? 'Pon my soul, it amuses me to think you fancied I ever meant to accept your offer." With which final shot exit Master Dick, thinking himself *so* great and grand, poor boy, in having humiliated his young sister, and utterly unconscious of how pitifully little he would have appeared in any but her generous eyes.

These young men who snub their sisters, bully their mothers, and sneer at all home duties and home affections, in the hope of appearing manly and dashing in the eyes of their fellow-men—does no one ever stoop to enlighten them as to the utter *un*manliness; the contemptible pettiness of such a line of conduct? Does no one ever tell them that the strongest and bravest men are always the most tender and unselfish; that the greatest of this world's conquerors have bowed their heads at the sacred name of "Mother;" and that the God-man himself has turned the immutable laws of creation aside, and broken the very bonds of death, in pity to a sister's tears? No, the fact of it is that men worthy of the name look on these petty manikins with too vast a contempt, to care how much the latter expose the meanness of which they think it "grand" to boast. Looking on the women in their families as precious and tender things, doubly sacred from their helplessness, men have no pity on the ephemera who are almost invariably the curse of the homes they despise, the life-long burden on the women they ill treat.

"When I hear A—— talking of his sisters," said a big, bearded soldier, one of the heroes of Lucknow, to me the other day, "I always feel inclined to pitch the little cur out of the club-window; but one can't dirty one's fingers with such trash, you know."

Half an hour later, I saw A—— pulling at the new-born down on his upper lip, and boasting of his friendship with Major B——. "Lucknow B——, you know. Doosid bore I can't ask him to dinner; couldn't introduce a dashing fellow like that to my duffers at home, you know."

"Ha!" said his friend, another ephemera—"doosid bore! Yas—very," and went off to ridicule A——'s airs to some one else.

Verbum sat.

Kate, however, was still in that beautiful age when life has not lost its illusions, and human nature is still shrouded in idealities. She had not yet learned to see through people; and, with the usual irrational absurdity of youth, took those she liked for as much better as those she disliked for the reverse of what they were. Time might, and trouble must, improve her perceptions ere long; for

"the eyes, Malvine, that have pierced the screen,
Are the tear-washed eyes of pain."

But at present human nature, as typified by a tart, meant with her, frosting of sugar over a lighter or heavier pastry. She had some general idea of hidden ingredients within; but youth seldom searches beyond the outside. It is easier to imagine than to realize when one is young. Imagination dies with the growth of years; and then we come to see and be content with realities, and look with pitying superiority on the illusions of those who are still in the charmed existence out of which we have passed. Ah, my friends! remember the old saying, "Where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise." There's a deal of truth in that hackneyed proverb, and believe me, there is no ignorance so blissful as that which glorifies with an ideal halo the natures and characters of those belonging to us.

When Dick was gone, Kate cried unrebuked, though not for long, as her horse coming to the door, she was obliged to get ready for her ride, and fresh air and brisk exercise soon carry away the tears of youth. Early as it was in the spring, there were a good many people in the Park, and she would almost have forgotten her annoyance and its cause if, in returning, she had not come suddenly upon Bernard Clive, in the act of assisting a lady, in deep but simple mourning, into a cab which stood at the corner of Hyde Park Place. His back was towards Miss Bellew, therefore he remained totally unconscious

of her proximity; but, even in passing, Kate could not help remarking the royal beauty of the woman's face, showing so pale and fair within the sorrowful frame of her widow's bonnet, and the full and gracious curves of her noble figure. It was only a cursory glance; but Kate had all a young girl's enthusiasm for beauty, especially that of an entirely different order from her own; and she was struck by the air of deference and courtesy expressed in Clive's every gesture.

"He can be civil to some people," thought Kate, angrily. "Hateful man, making poor dear Dick quarrel with me! I wonder who she is. No one grand, or she wouldn't go in a cab; and yet, somehow, she looked like a duchess. Oh, dear! I hope Dick will be in a good humor when he comes home this evening."

An idle hope; or, at least, one which, whether granted or not, mattered little to Kate, as Dick did not come home till many hours after his sister's brown eyes were closed in healthy sleep, and faint whitish streaks were beginning to appear in the eastern horizon, and herald the approach of day. Then, indeed, Lady Margaret's maternal watchfulness heard the latch-key turn in the lock below, and the unsteady step of her first-born stumbling as it passed upstairs to his own room. Poor lady! many a watchful hour had Dick given her before now; and the younger one wondered at the composure with which, on the following morning, she received the news that Mr. Dick had a headache, and wasn't able to come down to breakfast—merely ordering a cup of very strong coffee to be made and taken up to him, with no comment beyond a faint expression of annoyance on the news. Kate, with the egotism of youth, put down Dick's headache and non-appearance to the ill-usage he was laboring under from herself in particular and the family in general; but Lady Margaret knew better, and when her son made his appearance for a moment, before going to his friend's chambers—pale, hollow-eyed, and nervous, with shaky hands and irritable brow—the mother met his complaints with a lack of outward sympathy which

shocked Kate, who was keeping in the background till forgiven.

"This sort of thing will never do, Dick," she said, with an air of aggravation which puzzled her daughter—"even if you were only killing yourself; but the example—I am thankful Tom isn't at home." And Dick shrugged his shoulders pettishly, and went out with some mumbling remark about "lecturings," which Kate tried to excuse, as mother was a little bit hard. She was often up awfully late at balls, and had a headache, and didn't come down till late in the morning, without being blamed for it the least bit in the world; and now he was gone without looking at her, so that she did not know whether she were forgiven or not.

Evening decided in the negative. Dick did not come home to dinner; and when he made his appearance at tea-time, it was in company with Clive, upon whom Lady Margaret at once seized for a confidential talk, during which Kate had leisure to find out that her brother was even more thoroughly out of sorts than before, and disposed to snub her most ingratiating advances. Madge and he had already had words on account of a cuff bestowed on George, whom the younger girl considered as her own special property to quarrel with and protect, so that those two juveniles had retired to spend the evening roasting chestnuts in the schoolroom; and Kate, finding that Eve was, as usual, too much absorbed in a book for gossip, retreated to the piano, in hopes that some of Dick's favorite music might have a soothing effect on his nerves and temper.

She was anything, but pleased when, after about ten minutes of solitude, some one sauntered under the arch, and behold it was not Dick, but the young barrister.

"Am I interrupting you?" said Clive, with that half-smile which Kate hated on his face, and which seemed to say, "I know you detest me, but I don't care in the least."

Aloud he said in addition:

"I thought you might like to hear what has been settled about your brother's affairs."

"Thank you," said Kate, who was indeed longing to know, though not from him, "I dare say my mother or Dick will tell me all about it to-night; we always talk over family things when we are alone. Has it not been a lovely day?"

"Very lovely," replied Clive, the smile a little more visible—she positively seemed to *amuse* him!—"and the night is still more so—too fine altogether to be wasted indoors, wherefore I am come to bid you good night, and leave you to your family chat."

"Good night," said Kate, rather unwarrantably mortified; and then she remembered that Dick had accused her of being rude to his friend, and driving him out of the house. Was she doing so now? Her cheeks flamed up at the idea.

"But it is very early," she said, 'trying not to speak stiffly, and hoping Dick heard and approved, "and the night will keep. Are you tired of us that you hurry away so soon?"

"I am not the least tired of you," said Clive, "not having had sufficient opportunity—as yet; but 'prevention is better than cure,' you know, so— However, I really want to speak to you for one minute, so, if you will try to endure me for so long, and not leave off your playing, I will do so."

"About Dick again?" asked Kate, with a quick nervous thrill, producing quite a little peal of false notes, and which made her brother exclaim in horror from his easy-chair.

"No," said Clive, gravely, "except that I know you have kept your word—at some cost, I am afraid."

Kate's color rose again. The treacherous color always *would* come and go, in her fair young skin, in that unpleasant way.

"At what cost?" she asked, proudly. "I don't quite know what you mean. Of course I did as I promised. I don't know if I was wise—"

"It is always wise to take advice from people who *do* know," said Clive, calmly. "But what I want to ask you now is something quite different. You know Lady Vanborough, I believe?"

"Bee Vanbor——" began Kate, then checking herself quickly—"you mean the younger Lady Vanborough, don't you? Sir Alec's widow—she is one of my greatest friends."

"Then I am afraid you could not give me a good idea of what she is like, as young ladies' friendships are sometimes like love—blind!"

"Then you had better not ask me," retorted Kate, wickedly.

"I would not, if I were not curious to hear what you would say. I know Lady Vanborough, and I think her a lively, well-informed, very pleasant, and very eccentric woman. There! you see I am candor itself with you. Also I believe she is good-natured, or at any rate good-tempered. Can you confirm that opinion?"

"I don't see why you should want to know," said Kate; "if I didn't answer, however, I suppose you would think I meant 'No;' and you would be wrong, quite wrong. I never knew anybody kinder or better; and I was a little girl at school when she was a big one, so I ought to know."

"Decidedly you ought," said Clive. "There is no better place than school for bringing out the character of either a man or woman. And so you really like her? Well, I agree with you."

"Do you?" said Kate, a little satirically.

"And I am very glad to hear your opinion."

"Why?"

"Oh! because I made a bet that one woman could praise another without a single 'but,' (always provided that the latter were ten years older than herself, and not likely to cross her path in any way). You see you have won me my bet. Good evening"—with which Clive departed as imperturbable as usual, and leaving Kate fuming because she knew that he had not given her a shadow of his real reason, and was equally aware of, and indifferent to, her knowledge of that fact.

CHAPTER IX.

BERNARD CLIVE.

BERNARD CLIVE had had a hard life, and it had tended to make him to all appearance, and certainly to his own belief, a hard man. His father, a country rector, had from the day of his wife's death concentrated his whole affections on one child, the baby whose birth had cost its mother's life; and who, after growing up into a delicate, handsome boy, wayward and winning, and spoiled by father, brothers and sisters, had gone to college, got into trouble, drifted from bad to worse, and died a miserable death before his twentieth birthday in the quaint, secluded home, whose happiness he had destroyed from the first hour of his wasted life. It was Bernard who had followed him through his evil courses, trying with patient brotherly kindness to lead him from them; but Bernard had always given way to little Cyril in their childish days, and it was not likely Cyril would give way to him now, until it was too late for amendment; and when his brother brought him home, it was not to begin a new life in this world, but to pass the last few weeks of existence in seeking for a better "length of days, even life eternal," in the world to come.

It was Bernard then who devoted himself to watching over the second boy's career, and who gave up the profession of his heart, and all the amusements natural to his age, for slaving to get a double first, and, having got it, to enter himself for the Bar, because his father wished it—the father who now clung more to the presence of the

second son, who had done nothing for him, than to the elder, who did all; but Philip had Cyril's eyes and Cyril's impetuous voice, and Bernard was like no one but a deceased uncle with whom old Mr. Clive had had a life-long feud. He would call Philip to him and pat his shoulder, and take his arm out walking, while he merely greeted Bernard with a nod, and spoke to him in his shortest manner; and Bernard kept out of his way, putting Philip forward on all possible occasions, and yet doing many a little thing for his father which the other was supposed to have done, and got the credit for.

He used to say quite coolly, and as a matter of course, "The governor likes better to see Philip about him;" and no one in the family grieved more heartily than Bernard when, just before Philip left Oxford, the rector, whose eyes had long been failing, lost the sight of them altogether, and was thus shut out from the view of that face which had grown so dear to him. His daughter, who came next to Bernard, was married already; but her husband had died in the first year of their wedded life: died of softening of the brain, a malady so terrible that, but for her elder brother's aid and sympathy, her own mind might have given way under the strain. He brought her home too, after all was over; and shortly afterwards Philip took orders, and returned to Woodleigh as his father's curate.

"My right hand and my eyes," the old man would say, fondly. "Bernard is a clever man, they tell me; but he's away in London doing for himself, and prospering finely; and I should be lost without Philip. Fancy the dear lad consenting to live here with his allowance for a salary, buried in a country place when he might be a fashionable, well-paid preacher elsewhere—and for my sake! But Phil had always Cyril's eyes, and his was a tender heart through all."

Mr. Clive never guessed that it was Bernard who had persuaded Philip into the sacrifice, and had used his own prosperity to augment his brother's allowance to the rate of a very fair salary, frequently denying himself even necessary comforts and indulgences to add to those of

the family at home. Philip knew it, and so did Harriet (Mrs. Barnard), who often received crisp bank-notes for ten and twenty pounds from her brother; but with a peculiar shy reserve which, springing from being undervalued, had been his burden through life, he had begged that his father might not be told; and his request was scrupulously complied with.

"It is a real pleasure to my father to receive anything from you, Phil," he said to his brother; "it would not be so from me;" and the curate acquiesced.

It had grown to be a family matter of course that Bernard was no favorite. "A dry, cold, taciturn sort of fellow like him did not care about that sort of thing." Some people must get the kicks and some the halfpence in life. Philip got the halfpence, and Bernard loved him well enough to be content with the kicks: loved them all well enough to be glad to drink beer instead of wine, and see Harriet driving her now infirm father in a little pony-carriage—his gift—and deny himself an autumn tour, that Harriet's one little girl might be sent to an expensive school at Brighton. Mrs. Barnard had been left badly off in consequence of the legal inability of her husband to make a will during the last months of his life. He had made one some years before his marriage, leaving the bulk of his property among relations of his own; and on that will they acted, leaving Harriet with little more than had been secured to her in the marriage settlements for herself and her child. It was an iniquitous affair, but even Bernard's law practice failed in giving his sister the victory. He did the best he could for her instead; and Harriet thought him surly and unsympathetic because, when she abused her husband's relations with feminine warmth and vehemence, he merely shrugged his shoulders with the sarcastic observation:

"Merely the way of the world, my dear. Don't excite yourself, and don't put your faith in relations in future."

"Bernard! how can you!" cried his sister, indignantly. "I am sure there are no other relations who could behave so shamefully, so meanly, so—"

"Are you?" said Bernard, coolly; "I'm not. If you take my advice, Harry, you'll never be *sure* of any one, unless it happens to be his own interest to further yours. Otherwise, 'give one hand to your friend, and keep the other on your revolver,' as the Californians say."

"Living in London has certainly not improved your morals, Bernard," said Harriet, severely. "If you practice as you preach, you must trust very few people."

"I trust *no one* till I have proved him," Bernard answered, in his hardest tone, "and even then my trust is accompanied with a prayer—'May the second temptation be no greater than the first.'"

"And yet you expect people to believe in you, I suppose?"

"By no means—unless, as with my clients, my interests and theirs run in the same groove. It is perhaps well for you that they do in your case."

"I don't believe you, Bernard!" cried his sister; "you mayn't be very passionately attached to any one, but I don't believe you would ever do an unkind turn to me, or Minie, even if it were for your *interest*—horrid word!"

Bernard stooped and kissed her, laughing. He was not given to caresses; but even that shred of justice moved his gratitude. It was something to be told by those to whom he devoted himself that they did not think he would *rob* them. Some minds are obliged to be contented with small favors.

Philip had been the trouble of late. His disposition was not very unlike Cyril's; though his life had as yet been as exemplary as his brother's had been the reverse; and though, in addition to the latter's passionate, impulsive character, he shared Bernard's obstinacy and determination of will. The Clives were descended from some of the bluest blood in England, and, like many people whose means are not commensurate with their station, were intensely proud of it; wherefore, it was, of course, necessary that if Philip married—as was very likely, he being peculiarly sensitive to feminine grace and beauty of a refined type—his choice should rest on some one as well dowered in point of birth as of worldly means.

Both Bernard and Harriet had been secretly anxious on this subject of late : the former, lest Philip should go and fall in love with some penniless girl—"When, of course, they would have a dozen children at once, and I should have to keep them," thought Bernard; the latter, lest Philip should fix on a wife among the middle-class young ladies in the little country town nearest to Woodleigh—"Some one whom one would never dream of visiting," said Mrs. Barnard, with a little shiver of dismay, when she discussed the subject with her father, Philip being out among the poor.

"No fear, my love, no fear!" the old gentleman answered, confidently. "If it were Bernard, indeed—a queer fellow always, and too much like your Uncle William for me to fathom—but Phil will never disappoint us. Wait awhile, Harry, my dear, and you'll see that he's as particular as we could be; there's time enough."

But Harriet had not to wait long; the time was near at hand.

At the bottom of the rectory-garden stood a small cottage smothered in jessamine, and originally built for some particular curate belonging to a previous rector. Mr. Clive, having no private fortune of his own, had not been able to keep a curate; and during the boys' school and college days, the cottage had been let to an elderly female cousin. Unfortunately, just as Mr. Clive's blindness was coming on, this good lady found out that the cottage must be damp. In one room, where she had not been during nine of the thirteen years of her residence there, she found blue mould on the paper, and stains of moisture most distressingly evident upon the ceiling. On the strength of this, she took to bed with a bad cold; and on the strength of that cold, she died some four months later, declaring with her last breath—she being then some ninety odd years of age—that it was the damp of the cottage which had killed her. Harriet wrote up to Bernard at once, begging him to find a new tenant for them.

"Either a relation or a friend, if you possibly can, dear Bernard. Remember, the cottage opens *into* our garden, so that whoever lives there must be almost one with us.

You know my dear father's extreme exclusiveness, and how entirely I share it; so I need not ask you to be more than careful in your choice of a tenant; and you are aware that at present it is impossible for us to afford any alterations in the garden which would at all cut off the cottage from us, in case the people there being undesirable for inmates."

Bernard was aware of both facts. A couple of weeks later he wrote:

"I have just heard of a likely tenant for the cottage from our cousin, Canon Digby. A widow lady, with an invalid relation, has been boarding with his brother-in-law, Dr. Dunn, at Hastings. The winds there, and the noise of a family, are too much for the invalid lady, and they are anxious to find a quiet little cottage in a pretty country place. Both Canon Digby and his brother-in-law speak in more than high terms of both ladies, the widow especially. She is still in her first weeds, middle-aged, somewhat reserved and exclusive, but dignified, graceful, and refined enough to win respect and attention from every one. The Canon is sure you would be charmed with her. However, as she seems to the full as particular as you are, perhaps a personal interview would be best before deciding anything. To this end I have suggested that the widow lady should go down to Woodleigh, see the cottage, and pay you a visit."

This suggestion was carried out, and with such effect on both Mrs. Barnard and the visitor, that before another fortnight the two strange ladies were comfortably established at the cottage.

"My poor cousin, Miss Hyacinth de Vaux, said it was damp," said Mrs. Barnard, while going round the little tenement with her widowed lodger. "But considering that she was ninety-five, poor dear, and had lived thirteen years here without ever using this room, I *do* think imagination had something to do with it."

"It looks to me as dry and pretty and sunshiny as a house well could be; and I am sure the quiet and country air will agree with my poor relative," answered the other lady, in the full gracious tones which had taken

Mrs. Barnard's fancy from the first. "We will certainly seek no further."

And she who spoke was the stranger we have already met in Alma Terrace—the object of Mrs. Spinks's virtuous suspicions—Mrs. Grey.

Harriet, the ultra-exclusive, had set a dangerous example in yielding to the fascination of a voice and manner exceptionally refined. Philip followed it.

CHAPTER X.

NOTHING TO WEAR.

THERE was to be a grand ball at No. 4, Gresham Square, the De Ponsonbys' family mansion, and Mrs. De Ponsonby was eloquent in lamenting the inconvenience thereof. If Petre—the son and heir of the family was called Petre, a name which looked well enough on paper, but which was a perpetual mortification to the tongue: for how distinguish it from the plebeian P-e-t-e-r of the small shop-ocracy?—if Petre, I say, had but condescended to be born in May or June, then a ball would have come in as an acceptable addition to the other festivities of the season; or had the happy event occurred in winter, its twenty-first anniversary might have been celebrated with becoming pomp and Christmas festivity at his grandfather's country seat in Warwickshire; but to come of age in Lent, just at the end of Lent too, when, of the few people who were in town, some were on the eve of rushing away for the Easter peep at green things, and the others ("some of the very nicest too," as Mrs. De Ponsonby said, with a sigh of ill-usage) replied to their cards of invitation with the civilest regrets, but they NEVER (doubly underlined) went into any gaieties in Lent: dancing in seasons of the Church's mourning: being against their principles. It was too bad!

"And if they would only come, and *not* dance!" poor Mrs. De Ponsonby exclaimed, in accents of despair. "Principles are all very well, but really in such a case as this—such a very exceptional case,"—and indeed the good lady felt additionally injured from the fact that she

had been forced to abrogate her very strongest principles of exclusiveness, and invite all sorts of people, even poor relations and subalterns' wives and families, to form the padding of her otherwise almost naked rooms. It was a veritable case of "going out into the highways and by-ways," and I am afraid the general's wife regarded her last-invited guests very much as the "lame, the halt, and the blind" mentioned in the parable. They would have been gratified had they known! but isn't it a comfort to think that we don't often know how we are considered by the friends who greet our entry into their ball-rooms with smiles and pretty speeches, and then turn aside to wonder who on earth we are! The gift of the *diable boiteux* is not to my mind an enviable one. The emerald that "by its paling or flashing hue speaks if my best-beloved be false or true" would be to me the most unacceptable of gifts. In fact, I should return it with thanks, and the parcel prepaid, that I might not be burdened with it. Is it not bad enough that my "best-loved" should be false without my being aware of her falsehood? I shall find it out soon enough, without the presence of an intrusive emerald to rob me of my brief and happy delusion. It is a pleasure to be deluded in some cases, and why should I be robbed of it? Will any one quarrel with me because when pretty Mrs. A. greets me with "Oh, my dear G., how good of you to come to me this afternoon! I am so charmed to see you," I choose to accept the greeting as gospel, believe that I am very good for coming (though I only just looked in because I wanted to glance at the *Saturday*, which A. takes in, and I don't), and feel persuaded that my hostess is charmed to see me, though she had forgotten my name till she glanced down at the card her footman handed her, and forgot my existence the moment after I had drifted among the crowd?

"Then, in fact, you like to be humbugged," says Mr. Byle Sours, on reading this. Yes, my dear sir, if it will save the "wearyfu'" arguments I see written on your long and yellow visage, let me cut the Gordian knot at once, and say that, if accepting a gift at whatever title it be labeled with outside is being humbugged, then I do

like it decidedly. When I am enjoying the delicious flavor of a prime "home-fed" turkey, a present from the country, it is no pleasure to me to be shown the ticket of a London tradesman which has been found dangling from the wretched bird's leg. If Georgina bestows upon me one shining ringlet from those golden tresses I so ardently admire, I do not thank her loving cousin Amy for informing me that the precious curl had only formed part of a Bond street *chevelure*. As a disinterested observer, indeed, I might rather praise Georgina's common sense in preferring to sacrifice a thing which can be replaced for a few shillings, to one which will only reproduce itself at the slow progress of most of Nature's handiwork, exhausted in this case by Auricomus and other washes; but under the circumstances I prefer to remain in ignorance, to be—humbugged, if you will, and happy in my humbugging.

Do *you* always mean every identical letter of what you say, oh, Pharisaical Byle Sours? and yet would you love the individual who constituted himself analyzer and translator of all your civil speeches? Go to, I say! It is well to look at the red side of the leaf, and leave the brown unguessed. So shall we be pleased with ourselves and our neighbors alike, and carry an unwrinkled brow to the grave.

"Yes," said Kate, "Mrs. de Ponsonby might well feel injured. Fasting is all very well and right, but when you compare the forty days in the desert with the solemn and never-to-occur-again event of Petre's coming of age—mamma, don't look shocked at me. I was only alluding to the Baptist."

I have already said that Kate had a slight and reprehensible tendency to satire; and although she restrained this speech till after Mrs. de Ponsonby had taken her departure, it is pleasing to know that Lady Margaret did look shocked, and took up her daughter on the instant.

"Kate, for shame! Don't be irreverent. It is inconvenient giving a ball just now, and I'm sure I am very sorry for them."

"Why do they do it, then?" said Kate, with the ready

impertinence of youth. "Can't Petre become twenty-one without all the world being advertised of the fact? Will any one of the people who go care a button whether it's his birthday or not? and such a silly, stammering boy, too, blushing worse than that Mr. Philpots when one speaks to him," cried this impatient young lady. "We didn't give a ball when Dick came of age."

"I should think not," said Lady Margaret, with a shiver. "If Dick were only half as steady as Petre! But he has left me no money for balls or anything else. No one can help a stammer, but there are much worse things—"

"Now, mother," cried Kate, "you don't mean to say that you'd rather have that stiff, clumsy Petre, *with* his stammer, than poor darling Dick, who can cure himself? By the way"—with a sudden change of subject for a still more interesting one—"I must have a new dress. I've nothing to wear—positively nothing—and did you notice that one at Peter Robinson's—sea-green tulle bouffante up to the waist, and with a cloud of tulle thrown over it, just looped back with a long trail of daisies and prim-roses. It was—oh! too exquisite—the very thing if I were a blonde; but if I had something like it in mauve, with—"

"Are you sure you have nothing that will do?" broke in Lady Margaret. "You had a new dress for Lady Gore's dance. I declare I don't know what to do when the bills come in."

"It is a great bother," said Kate, laying her pretty head sympathetically against her mother's knee, and turning up her face for a kiss, "but— Oh, no, none of them would do; and I did wear the one you mean again, just before Christmas, and got it frightfully torn. Don't you remember? And anyhow one must have a new dress for a grand affair like this. Every one else will, you know"—an unanswerable argument, before which Lady Margaret yielded, as she always did to Dick's pleadings, sighing but silenced.

"Of course I don't want you to look worse than other girls," she said, sadly, her mind reverting to the end and

aim of all feminine adornments, that final *parure* before the altar-rails at St. George's; and Kate broke into a merry laugh, and said the thought out in her own audacious way.

"Of course not, mamma. How are you ever to get me off (isn't that the right expression?) unless you get me up fittingly? All the big Bashaws would turn away from my ragged garb in horror, and I should be left a wall-flower in my teens. King Cophetuas don't look at beggar-maids now-a-days, mammy dear, I can assure you; and you know my Bashaw must be an extra big one, able to set Dick swimming, and take the whole family—By the way, after all I am not sure about lilac being a good color. It doesn't light up nearly as well as green; but then I am rather dark for green, and I'm not dark enough for maize. What a hateful person I am! I don't know any one so horribly difficult to dress if one even *thinks* of anything but white!" and Kate puckered up her brow, and almost stamped her small foot, in hearty disgust for her own unmanageable appearance. Said Lady Margaret, soothingly:

"Don't think about it, dear; but order the fly, and we will go to Madame Clarice at once."

She sighed again, poor hard-up mother! as she spoke; and yet she never thought of urging the economy which she knew was becoming positively necessary; and Kate, who would have parted with all her little fortune to her brother, and been glad of so doing, dreamed as little of the possibility of going without a new dress when she was tired of her old ones, as of going without her dinner when she was hungry. Why should the idea occur to her when nothing had ever suggested it?

Later in the evening she was describing the dress she had fixed on to Dick, and enhancing on the sweep of the train and arrangement of the flowers, with an animation which made Clive (he was always there now, Kate said) observe, in his driest manner:

"I never appreciated till now the importance of dress. What a wonderful thing it is! The construction of a new ministry seems nothing to that of a lady's 'polonaise.'"

"Fancy you knowing the correct name!" said Kate, good-humoredly; "but it is a wonderful tiresome thing if you like, especially if you are not a blonde," and her face took a pensive shade as she thought of the green dress aforementioned. "It is so difficult to decide," she went on. "I have not ordered it yet; but I think—don't you mamma?—that the one I was describing to Dick was the nicest."

"It was frightfully expensive," said Lady Margaret, "frightfully. I can't think where Madame Clarice gets her conscience. Twelve guineas for a dress which will only look fresh for one evening! You will ruin me, Katie."

"Why, you dear old darling!" cried Kate, putting a white hand on either of her mother's shoulders, "you wouldn't like me to go in a dressing-gown, and I haven't a dress of any sort that I haven't worn before."

"Do girls' dresses only wear once?" asked Dick. "What awful rubbish they must be! Ha, Kate! don't you preach to me about extravagance again.—We are all tarred with the same stick, you see, Clive."

Clive said nothing. He merely looked at the fire and smiled; but that smile stung Kate more than any words, and spoke, to her, a whole volume of comments on her magnanimous assertions uttered so short a time before. The red blood rushed up into her face with such a glow, it even dyed the pretty fingers still resting on her mother's shoulders.

"Why, Kate, how red you are!" cried George, who, his bedtime not having arrived, was amusing himself by swinging on to the back of Clive's chair, and taking a lively interest in the conversation of his elders. Clive looked up sharply, meeting Kate's honest, shame-faced blushes with a keenly scrutinizing glance; and George found himself suddenly ousted from his post of espionage on the barrister's chair.

"There is one great advantage in ladies' dresses over luxuries in general," said the latter, presently. "They are bought, made, and worn not for the wearer's selfish indulgence, but for the purely unselfish reason of giving

pleasure to other people, or doing credit to her own. No one ever heard of a woman buying a ball-dress to wear in her bed-room, or for her own solitary gratification; therefore, one of these two objects must be the motive of all those ethereal 'toilettes' which gratify our eyes at night; and I have no doubt that Miss Bellew's will fulfill both. By the way"—with a swift change of subject—"I also am going to this famous ball."

"The deuce you are!" said Dick, languidly. "I didn't know you knew the De Ponsonbys."

"I do not; but a friend of yours, Lady Beatrice Vanborough, does, and has kindly asked me to go with her."

"And you agreed! What a good Samaritan! The De Ponsonbys seem to be enlisting all their benevolent acquaintances in the cause of helping to fill those hideous rooms of theirs. I shan't show myself, I know."

"Why, Dick! Oh!" cried Kate, waking from a meditation which, to judge by expression, was not a happy one—"all I cared about in going was that you would be there."

"Thank you, my child, but you see I've no hankering to meet Uncle Theo. after his language in the Park last week; and he's just as likely as not to be there, De Ponsonby was a sub. under him in my lord's army days; and they're both 'Carlton' men, you know."

"But Uncle Theo. never goes to balls—does he, mother?—Oh, Dick! do come. There will be no one else there that I care the least for, except Bee Vanborough," said Kate, pathetically and quite unconscious of the poor compliment she was paying to the gentleman who was so busy trying to arrange the focus of Eve's stereoscope, that the young lady might employ it on some photographs he had brought her. He saw it, for he was quick-sighted to a fault; but he also saw her unconsciousness, and smiled, not ill-temperedly. I don't think he was an ill-tempered man, though he called himself one.

Dick hemmed and hawed, and wouldn't promise. "Well—if Clive is going," he said, at last. "And I wonder if any of the other fellows I know are."

"A fellow I know is," said Clive, "and, by the way,

about the last person I should have expected to meet at a ball here."

"Who's that?"

"Oh, no one you know. I met him in New York when I was over there a year or so ago. He was not going into general society at all then—lived a hermit sort of life, and wouldn't look at a woman."

"Dear me! Why?" said Kate, opening her brown eyes in great amazement at this last item.

"A sort of modern Timon," added Eve. "I should like to meet him."

"Only he wouldn't look at you," said Madge, "so where would be the good?"

"Eve isn't a woman, so he would," put in George. "She's only a girl. Oh, is it my bed-time? I'm sure it isn't nine yet. How beastly! Oh, need I go yet, mamma?"

"But what had made your friend so misanthropical?" said Kate, returning to the charge as George was ejected. Clive looked a little annoyed, as if he had said more than he meant already.

"Oh—some family trouble, I believe. I dare say he would not care to have it remembered now. By the way, he was not a friend of mine; I only met him once or twice. He had been abroad for years."

"Is he going with Lady Bee?" asked Dick, and Clive answered, "No," rather shortly, as if he did not care to pursue the subject. Kate started another.

"Talking of Bee, mamma," she said, "do you know she has engaged a companion at last. She wrote to tell me so. I do think it is the funniest idea."

"I thought ladies in her position often wanted a friend or companion," said Clive, as Lady Margaret said, "Very funny," in acquiescence.

"Yes, and when her husband died three years ago, everybody said she ought to get one for propriety because she looked so young," replied Kate; "but she set herself against it quite obstinately. Mamma was quite vexed with her."

"Well, my dear, because it was out of sheer opposition to her mother-in-law."

"Well, mother mine, old Lady Vanborough is so disagreeable; and really Bee did not need a companion. She is one of those women who are perfectly able to take care of themselves anywhere."

"And therefore, as a woman's vocation in life is to be taken care of, thoroughly unwomanly," put in Dick.

"Dick," said Kate, solemnly, "you are a very dear boy, but you don't know anything in the world about women. I could take care of myself, and I'm not unwomanly."

Clive laughed—"Logic unanswerable!" he said. "At any rate, Lady Bee has testified to her womanliness by yielding now—'Best proof of womanhood you still will find in that sweet aptitude to change her mind.'"

"Yes, but this is such a queer arrangement," Kate said. "Nobody thinks she needs a companion now; so she has been looking out for one for some months, only not to go out with her, not to accompany her to the opera or anywhere, not even to appear when she has guests at home, without a special invitation; just for a companion for herself when she's alone and dull, to talk, or read, or sing to her as she wants, write letters, and all that sort of thing. She has been ever so long finding one to suit; for she would have a lady, and a pleasant-looking one; and pleasant-looking ladies generally wanted to go out with her; but now she has got a lady who hates society, and agrees with her in all her notions."

"In other words, a companion who objects to play foil to Bee as much as Bee objects her companion to play sheep-dog to her," said Dick, yawning. "Sensible women! And what like is the damsel? Elderly, I presume?"

"Not old, Bee says; and adds—oh! here is her letter:

"She has such a lovely face and style, that simply to have her sitting near me at work will be Paradise, after solitary gapings by myself, or dual bickerings with one of the Vanborough girls. If it were only to prevent those detestable young women from volunteering visits on the

score of my loneliness, she will be a blessing. You must come and look at her."

"Upon my word!" cried Dick. "We'll go together, Kittie. A girl too, and secluded in Bee Vanborough's boudoir! What an inducement to put up with her unbearable tongue, and go there often! Lovely, eh!"

"I don't think the lady is a girl, with all due deference to your anticipations, Bellew," spoke Clive, very slowly. "I am afraid you will be disappointed. You forget your friend's tendency to exaggerate."

"Why, have you seen her there? What is she like then?"

"Like a middle-aged widow lady, with her hair in bands, and a widow's cap, and sufficient quiet reserve to hold her position," Clive answered, in the same chilling way, and rising to go. Dick made a face of disgust.

"So much for your swans, Kittie! I am glad Clive saved me from being duped into a call.—And what about the loveliness, eh, Clive?"

Clive was just bidding good night to Lady Margaret. He looked over his shoulder.

"Really, you must not ask me to pronounce against any lady's claims in that line. What poet was it who said, 'Oh, womanhood, most fair within thyself.'"

"Hang it, my dear fellow, but I would rather have a woman whose fairness was not all '*within*.'"

"Exactly. Still, every man has a different taste in these matters."

"In other words, she is as ugly as sin."

"That again depends on the relative ugliness of sin. Men differ, as you are aware, even on that point. Good-night.—Miss Bellew, I shall expect to see you the most magnificently plumed of all the birds of Paradise on Friday next."

"He will be disappointed then," said Kate, gravely, when the door had closed. "Dick, dear" (nestling up to her brother), "I am so glad you said *that* about extravagance. Do you believe that it really hadn't crossed my mind before?"

"What hadn't? Are you crazy, child?" asked Dick, pinching the plump arms linked round his.

"No, but I am going to manage with what I've got. I hope I shan't look very horrid and dowdy," said Kate, with a little pout of her ripe under lip, "but if it will save twelve pounds—and at all events" (brightening up) "you will have to go with me now, for if I am a dreadful failure I shall want some one to stand by me."

"Thanks; a calm suggestion! I wonder the idea doesn't cross your limited mind, Miss Kittie, that if you were a 'dreadful failure,' as you call it, I might be ashamed to show in your company."

"A very likely notion! As if you cared less for me than I for you! And I wouldn't be ashamed of you if you had only shirt-sleeves and corduroys to appear in. There!"

CHAPTER XI.

"EYES LIKE LAMPS."

AFTER all the ball was a success, and the De Ponsonbys had not to "gnash their teeth" over the emptiness of their rooms. Reflected in the long mirrors, and relieved against the crimson draperies, troops of white-robed nymphs and whiter-fronted cavaliers, moved to and fro, or floated round in languid circles to the strains of a band of musicians skillfully hidden behind a small forest of azaleas—white, rose-colored and scarlet—dark-leaved evergreens, sweet-smelling lemon-leaves, and every hot-house shrub that could be collected. From every bracket and pilaster in the room drooped trails of fairy-like creepers, from baskets of cyclamen, hyacinths, and maiden-hair. In the conservatory, lit only by a huge lamp swung from the roof, within a globe of blue crystal, the silvery plash and murmur of a fountain, set among banks of ferns and garlands of brilliant flowers, shed a refreshing coolness over the warm, perfumed air; and on all sides, floating round the ball-room, toying with the refreshments, or dropped to rest among the leaves and flowers of the conservatory, jewels sparkled, and bright eyes shone, and clouds of tulle and areophane—white and colored—floated like the mists of morning, from forms as young and lithe as the immortal goddesses of old.

Mrs. de Ponsonby, leaning on the arm of Petre, glowed like an animated cabbage-rose.

Miss Fothergill, with every little bone in her neck and

shoulders quivering skeleton-like through a veil of violet-powder, pronounced it "too delicious. Oh, isn't it a divine ball, Mr. Philpots? and what a pity you can't dance! But you don't think it wrong of me, do you? Oh, do tell me."

Kate, in a plain white dress, chosen from her stores because it was "really quite fresh, only worn once for an hour," but equally lovely from its simplicity as from its freshness, a white dress looped with trails of real ivy green, and fresh with wood-primroses in her bosom, and a wreath of ivy and primroses in her wavy hair, one pretty hand resting lovingly on her brother's arm, stood the centre of a group of admirers, all clamoring to put down their names upon her card, while she—smiling and flushed with honest, childlike enjoyment, with lips apart and eyes beaming—granted or evaded their petitions, as caprice or kindness prompted, and stubbornly refused to give away one of the dances marked with a mysterious cross: "Dick's dances," she whispered to her mother. "He likes to dance with me, so I made him promise we should have those three."

Clive saw the animated group, and guessed, before he saw, who formed the centre. He had arrived late with his party, and having deposited Lady Vanborough on a sofa, and obtained the promise of a quadrille later, was sauntering across the room, when his glance fell on a gentleman standing by himself, and gazing with the half-curious, half-dreamy look of a stranger to such things at the scene around him. Their eyes met in a sort of mutual start of recognition. The gentleman made a half-salutation, as uncertain whether he were right in claiming acquaintance or not, and Clive stopped.

"Mr. M'Kenzie, I think," he said, courteously enough. "I fancied I saw you at the 'Travellers' yesterday; and a mutual friend told me you had returned to pay England a visit."

"Yes, I came home three weeks ago. How different everything is!"

"I suppose so. By the way, this is rather a different scene to the one in which we last met."

"Among the White Mountains, was it not? I thought I knew your face, though till you spoke I did not remember the name. Yes, different indeed!"

"I should not have fancied you a ball-going man."

"Neither am I. I believe that there is nothing now that I care less for in the lap of creation."

"And yet?" said Clive, smiling a little ironically.

"And yet I am at one! Exactly; but the simple reason is, that a fellow-passenger of mine and her sister had an invitation, and wanted to come very much. They are foreigners; the matron is shy; the husband was ordered to Lisbon three days before; and if I had not consented to act escort in his place, the poor little women would have fancied they had missed a great pleasure. At present I fear they are finding it a great delusion: more especially as my dancing days are over."

"You are evidently a good Samaritan, Mr. M'Kenzie," said Clive, laughing, "and report has done you wrong. Your New York friends called you the woman-hater."

"My New York friends did me less and the fair sex more than justice. Man's hatred, Mr. Clive, is something too strong to be wasted on things so utterly weak as women."

They were standing in the embrasure of a window, the stranger a slightly-built man, with a skin evidently tanned by foreign suns, and eyes like those of a stag—large, dark, and blazing with passionate feeling and intelligence: perhaps the handsomest—certainly the most noticeable—man in the room; and Clive, with his colorless skin, big, heavy limbs, and irregular features, seeming to be placed beside him for a foil—some of the women thought so, at any rate; I don't suppose the idea would have occurred to a man.

Up in the farther end of the long rooms, brilliantly lit by scores of gas-burners, reflected from flashing jewels and glittering mirrors, the band was playing the "Tournez Waltz" from *Madame Angot*. The tender minor key of the melody floated dreamily over the buzz of voices, and all around close-linked couples waved and swayed and turned, in languid rhythm to the soft slow rippling of the music.

"It reminds me of the Spanish dances in South America, only that they are still prettier, and less monotonous," said Dallas M'Kenzie. "Is it believable that any composer has succeeded in introducing an air which compels Englishwomen to dance as quietly as their Southern sisters?"

"You forget the unspeakable charm of *anything* novel in this used-up nineteenth century," said Clive, laughing. "To dance slowly and gracefully, in place of rushing round a room in furious circles, like an insane humming-top, tearing your neighbors' dresses, and reducing a lady-like girl to the appearance of an ill-used rag doll, is a new sensation, and therefore likely to take until some one invents another. Probably it will be the exact contrary. *Les extremes se touchent*, you know, in London particularly."

"I noticed Mrs. de Ponsonby put 'Tournez Waltz' in the corner of her card, and couldn't guess what it meant."

"Yes, and a wise idea it was. Who can guess how many extra guests she obtained by that simple device? By the way, don't you think the women grow more insane in the way of dress every year? Look at that one in flame-color, with peacock-feather trimming."

"Ay, she reminds me of some tropical bird I have seen. What a contrast to that pretty little girl in white, with primroses in her hair?"

"Which? There are so many;" but Clive's face changed—one would think he knew.

"That one standing beside the handsome lady in black velvet. I have noticed her once or twice. It is such a frank, honest face; and the eyes seem perfectly to beam with innocent happiness. Don't you see her? She is the simplest dressed girl in the room, and to my mind the most charming."

"Yes, I see her," Clive said, a queer sort of reluctance in his tone.

"And do you know who she is? I think I saw you talking to her chaperone."

"Yes"—with equal reluctance—"a Miss Bellew. I must leave you now. I am engaged for this dance;" and Mr. M'Kenzie was left alone.

Ten minutes later, when the dance was over, Clive found himself at Kate's side.

"I have not had time to speak to you yet," he said, in the short manner he always used to her. "You were dancing when I first saw your mother."

"Yes, with Dick. I always make Dick dance the first with me, unless he is engaged for it; he dances so well. But, Mr. Clive, I am very glad you have come up. I was really wishing to see you."

"Were you? Thank you," said Clive, his grave face lightening under the cordial tone.

"Yes; I wanted to ask you— Where is he now? Oh there, under that archway. Who is that gentleman you were talking to during the 'Tournez?'"

"Which gentleman?" Clive was certainly rather stupid this evening, and the light had gone out of his face again.

"Why, you were only talking to one," Kate answered, somewhat quickly. "I was looking at you both all the time, and he is the handsomest man in the room. I never saw such wonderful eyes; they are just like lamps. Who is he? Every one is asking, and no one seems to know."

"Every one is easily excited," said Clive, drily. "If you mean that gentleman under the arch there, he is a Mr. M'Kenzie."

"They say he has only just come to London. Is it the one you were speaking of?"

"Was I speaking of one?"

"Why, of course you were!" cried Kate, a little impatiently. "You said he never went into society."

"Then I must have been wrong—judging from appearances, at least."

"You know what I mean—that he *used* not to go into society when you knew him. Mamma and I have been watching him with interest, and have decided, first, that the trouble you spoke of is still written in his face; and secondly, that he is quite the most distinguished-looking man in the room. If he dances well, I shall not be satisfied till he is introduced to me."

"I do not think he dances at all; and I am not sure that you would very much care to know him, distinguished as he looks," Clive said, a little spitefully.

Lady Margaret's maternal solicitude took fire at once.

"My dear Katie, how imprudent you are! and in such a very mixed assemblage too. You must be more thoughtful; and really I think Mrs. de Ponsonby should be careful what sort of people—"

"I beg your pardon," Clive interrupted, with some annoyance. "You misunderstood me. Mr. M'Kenzie is, as far as I know, as much a gentleman as I am, and comes of a good family. I only meant—"

"Mr. Clive only meant to put me in the wrong, as usual, mamma," said Kate, flushing hotly. "That he did it at his friend's expense was immaterial."

Clive bowed.

"Thanks for the amiable motives with which you credit me, Miss Bellew, I—"

"Quarreling as usual, you two!" said Dick, coming up. "Let dogs delight to bark and fight' ought to be put up on both your tombstones. Katie, my child, you remind me of 'Red as a rose was she.' Why aren't you dancing?"

"I came to remind your sister that she had promised this dance to me," said Clive, "but as I have had the misfortune to offend her, I suppose she will hardly care to keep her engagement."

"Nonsense, my good fellow! Kate is not such a vixen as that—are you, Kittie, *m'amie*?"

"I am sure I don't know what I am," said Kate, glancing resentfully at Clive. "I am quite ready to dance with Mr. Clive when he wishes it."

Clive offered her his arm instantly, and without a word. If she had expected him to be magnanimous she was disappointed, and for the first few turns the little wrist he held was throbbing with indignation, and he could almost feel the angry beating of the heart so near his arm. It softened down gradually, and the red flush died out of her cheeks beneath another spell than words. He had not spoken, but between really good dancers there is a sort of natural affinity. You

can hardly move limbs and body in perfect dual time and melody without some sort of sympathy, however imperfect, exercising its soothing influence over the mind as well.

Before they had gone once round the room, Kate realized the fact that she had never danced with any one before whose step suited her so exactly; and she was almost angry with herself for feeling a shade of regret when he stopped at the entrance to the conservatory, and asked if she were tired.

"No, not at all," she answered, trying to speak as grimly, not as she felt, but as she felt she *ought* to feel towards such an unpleasant person. He looked down on her half sadly, half smiling.

"Miss Bellew, are we never to be friends? I did not mean to offend you just now. Will you not forgive me?"

"I don't think you care about my forgiveness, or my friendship either," said Kate, willfully. "You do offend me. I am not going to pretend you don't. I suppose I am not used to being snubbed by gentlemen—or ladies either" (this as an after-thought), "and I don't like it."

"I never intended to snub you."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Clive, I think you did, though you may not have intended me to resent it. I don't know in what way you usually speak to your lady acquaintances, but I can assure you your manner to me is not at all pleasant; and I do not like it."

"I have begged your pardon," he said, his voice as hard as his eyes were keen and searching, "I can do no more. You are utterly and entirely unjust to me, but that is no matter. You could not understand it if it were explained to you."

"If I were unjust it would matter very much—to *me*," said Kate, "but I don't think I am. Just now, for instance—"

"Yes, just now. You wished to know a person, an utter stranger to you, simply because he had beautiful eyes—'like lamps,' didn't you say?—and if you had been

my sister, I should have said just—but what does it matter? I suppose I took a liberty in saying anything. At any rate, you think so."

"Yes, I did think so," said Kate, uncompromisingly honest. "But if you did not mean it, there is an end of the subject. I wish" (with a little sigh) "that we could have been friends, but I think that is quite out of the question. We should never agree on any subject."

"Do you think so?"

"I am sure of it."

He made no answer, only put his arm round her waist and whirled her off again. His heart was beating most quickly now, but Kate did not guess it. Only at the end of the room she looked up naïvely into a very stern, pale face, and said, with her own saucy, coaxing smile:

"I was quite wrong. We should agree in one thing: you dance better than almost any one I know—except Dick."

"Then at least you will not refuse to dance with me," cried Clive, and carried her off her feet again nothing loth.

"They are the best-matched couple in the room," said Mrs. de Ponsonby to the gentleman she was conversing with, and putting up her gold eyeglass as the couple flew past her; "Kate Bellew is wild about dancing."

"She is lovely enough to make young men wild about dancing with her," said M'Kenzie, warmly. "Will you introduce me when it is over?"

"My dear Mr. M'Kenzie! you, a world-wide traveler, so easily subjugated!"

"In what does subjugation consist?" said the gentleman, good-humoredly—"liking to talk to a fresh, innocent-looking little girl, in the pause between two of her dances? You have no pity on us middle-aged, non-dancing men, Mrs. de Ponsonby, or you would not condemn us to silent contemplation of countless twinkling toes for a whole evening."

"Well, beware, that is all. Miss Bellew is a terrible little flirt."

"Is she? Poor little girl!" he said, smiling sadly. "I

am sorry. However, she looks too young to have done much harm yet; and as, fortunately, it would be out of the question with *me*, I may do some good in standing between her and one of her victims for a few minutes."

"Ah! I see you feel you are invulnerable. Well, I should hope so, for the credit of your taste."

And, accordingly, Kate had hardly been returned to her mother's side, before she heard some one being introduced to her mother and herself, and saw Lady Margaret bowing to the dark, handsome stranger, with the "lamp-like" eyes, about whom Clive and she had quarreled. With an involuntary impulse of mischief she looked up smiling, half consciously, half triumphantly, at Clive; but he was already turning away; and though during the evening she remembered him, and glanced round for him more than once, he appeared no more. Truth to say, he had seen Mrs. de Ponsonby approaching with her convoy; had caught Kate's dimpling flush of saucy pleasure; and, bitterly vexed, for reasons best known to himself, had left the room at once.

Why he should care so much he could hardly tell himself. It is true he knew something about Dallas M'Kenzie's past life—something which, if true, would make him shrink from seeing that gentleman, however estimable in other ways, an intimate friend of any woman dear to him. But was Kate Bellew dear to him? Was she not, on the contrary, rather obnoxious than otherwise—a young woman with whom, as she said herself, he could never agree on any one subject? Yet why, on the other hand, should he let her annoy him? Why should they be always meeting and always fighting, when by simply staying away from the house he could devote himself to sweeter and gentler maidens, at whose words and deeds he need not be for ever carping? Why?

Well, he told himself that he did not care about any other girls. They did not interest him—their very sameness, even their outward faultlessness, palled on him. They were all so *deadly* alike, so thickly glazed with the stereotyped varnish of society, that there was no getting at the real living woman within them. But

Kate was *all* life; not mere wax-doll existence, but keen, eloquent, faulty life. You had no time to think of what qualities were hidden within her, because so much was shown outside. She was like a varied and picturesque landscape—all hills and valleys, foaming streams and sheltered woods. You never thought what it might be beneath, or whether mines of gold or silver were hidden under that luxuriant veil. Occupied with the infinite variety of the surface, you took for granted the buried riches within; but perhaps there was nothing within, nothing but surface in her nature. He could not tell. Lawyer as he was, all he knew as yet was that that surface was such a mass of inconsistencies—some right, some wrong, some lovable and some reprehensible—that it took up all his thoughts, to the exclusion of every one else. He told himself that he was impatient with her because she was so wrong-headed, so thoughtless and inconsistent. But if she had been a perfectly right-minded, prudent, and consistent young woman, I doubt very much whether he would have given her a second thought. He told himself, too, that he was angry with her for “not doing justice to herself;” but why should he care whether she were just to herself or not? What was she to him but Dick Bellew’s sister? only—though he had taken a kindly interest in Dick, as a young man and distant connection, strangely reminding him of his dead brother, and going to destruction as that brother had gone—his interest had been doubled and intensified ever since he had known Dick’s family. The fact was, he was inconsistent himself; and not being willing to admit as much, tried to compress the facts into his theories, instead of enlarging his theories to hold the facts. He was a man of ultra-dogmatic theories and rigidly uncompromising opinions; and both his theories as to womankind in general, and opinions of women in particular, were most sharply marked out, and laid down for the guidance of his life.

The pity was that, this being so, he did not let them guide him, but departed from them forthwith, and then irked at the woman for making him turn out of his narrow road, instead of at himself for turning out of it.

His theory of women, for instance, was that they were to be low-voiced and mild-eyed, imbued with unruffled dignity, filled with holy simplicity, and speaking only with sweet propriety and gracious gentleness. A very fair picture, as any one will allow, and nobody could quarrel with him for making up his mind never to care for any woman who was not formed after such a type in all and every particular; but Kate was the very opposite of it, and yet he did care for her a great deal more than was compatible with his own comfort: almost as much as for Mrs. Grey, who, to all appearance at any rate, was the very embodiment of his own ideal. He admired Mrs. Grey the most; he looked up to her, and liked her with a liking which was strengthened by esteem. He wished with all his heart that Kate resembled her, and was decidedly annoyed with the young lady for not doing so; but the very fact of his anger proved that she was something more to him than others; for had Mrs. Grey treated him one-half as coldly, or departed a tenth part as much from his ideal, he would have ceased to seek her society, or trouble himself about her interests. The fact was that Kate had cast a spell over him; and instead of yielding to it, and acknowledging that there might be other types of equal excellence though differing from his own, he chafed against the fascination and felt bitterly towards the fairy who had woven it.

Just a man, dear reader, a man who knew what right was, and strove to do it himself, bitterly reproaching himself if he departed by ever so little from his own high standard of duty; and yet feeling a sort of scornful superiority to the men and women around him who, having a different standard, or none at all, appeared to him to live after the gratification of their own vagrant wills and selfish desires. A good man, but unjust, because he expected as much from all around him as from himself, and when they fell short, gave them credit for nothing at all: a good man, whose whole life was ruled by strong self-control and unyielding principle, with a strain of almost womanly tender-heartedness buried out of his own ken, beneath a host of rules and regulations; yet incon-

sistent as all good men and women must be—as Kate herself was, whose life was regulated by impulse, the impulse of a generous, loving, utterly undisciplined heart, with a strong little backbone of principle behind it.

CHAPTER XII.

BEE VANBOROUGH.

“**I**N good time, Miss Katie Bellew! Walk in straight and make confession. I thought you had given me up, you fickle little sinner.”

It was Lady Vanborough, or Bee Vanborough, as her friends called her, who was speaking: a woman of middle height, dark and good-looking; but already, at eight-and-twenty, showing a tendency to coarseness, a color unlovely from the depth of its carnations, and a figure rapidly losing grace in flesh, which added at least ten years to her apparent age: a woman who enjoyed her pint of porter at luncheon as much as she did a new opera, and her champagne and port at dinner as much as Lord Lovegoats did his: who spoke succulently of certain patés and entremets, and recommended choice varieties of sauces to you with an appreciative gusto which would have convinced the most sceptical of her own enjoyment thereof: a very jolly woman, a very likable one, made for this world, not the next, and “wiser in her generation than the children of light,” enjoying this one to the full: good-hearted and good-tempered, detesting sentiment, loathing poetry, clever above mediocrity, plain in speech almost to insult, independent as the wind, courageous as a dragoon, and scorning utterly dependence and cowardice in others: a woman who would fight another woman’s battles to the death if she cared for her, and lash vindictively a third who, for some occult reason, had not happened to take her fancy:

in whom a certain set of ladies and most men of the world delighted: whose house was one of the pleasantest in London: whose cavalier treatment was good-humoredly submitted to; and yet, who had a perfect army of faults and eccentricities; and notably among the former, one of which nobody would ever have accused her, and which she herself would have indignantly repudiated. Affectation.

Now, you know, even in whispering this, I can see sundry of her allies—Kate, *par exemple*—glaring at me in indignation. “Bee Vanborough affected! Why, she was the most daringly honest and unconventionally outspoken woman in London. People blamed me for scouting small affectations, but I was nothing to her.”

Exactly, my dear little Kate, because you were natural, and Bee Vanborough was an over-colored copy from nature. Is there no such thing as an affectation of frankness and unconventionality? Believe me, it is not so uncommon as you may imagine. Lady Bee cared so little for the opinions of society that she would come downstairs whistling, at the top of her voice, bars of favorite songs, and with a total disregard of the aristocratic ears listening to her from the drawing-room; and her friends said, “So like Bee Vanborough!—unconventional and easy to a fault: wouldn’t alter one of her funny little home habits for the grandest bashaw living.” But I see no easiness in a habit put on only to startle the grand bashaws, and not indulged in at all in her home privacy. Bee Vanborough never thought of whistling, at school-boy pitch, about the house when she was alone. It was the same with her conversation. She said things which shocked you in the most open and daring way; but I doubt if she thought them; or would have repeated them a second time if they hadn’t shocked you, or if you had taken them coolly as an every-day matter of course. I have sometimes wickedly amused myself, by the way, in doing that very thing. The result was amusing. First she “piled the agony” higher, until (and she is tolerably shrewd) she felt herself ridiculous in her own eyes; and then she dropped it altogether, and vindicated her common sense

by becoming quite pleasantly unaffected and commonplace.

Treat all her sham of want of sham in the same manner, and I believe you might have made a very nice woman of her.

On the present occasion, Lady Bee was standing at the door of her little boudoir, a pretty little place, chiefly composed of sea-green silk, point-lace, old china, and quaint bric-a-brac, with a couple of riding-whips and a fox's brush, supporting an original Murillo, over the chimney-piece, a pair of boxing-gloves and a homœopathic medicine chest in a corner, a case of silver-mounted pistols, one loaded, *open* on the console table, and a volume of Ouida's worst, also open, on the sofa. After what I have said, however, the most virtuous of you need not shrink at the mention of this last article. Lady Bee was no reader, and abhorring sentiment as she did, would have found it difficult to wade through a single chapter of the "naughty" novelist—always excepting the gastronomical portions.

"But this is *my* reading—too strong for you, my dear," she said, holding it up to Kate before giving her both hands in greeting. "Now, come and make confession."

"What am I to confess, Bee?" said Kate, taking the two large, white, jeweled hands in hers. "It is not more than a fortnight since I came to see you."

"And twice in that fortnight I've seen a bay horse in the Row alongside of yours; and once I have dined with you, and found the legs that bestrode that bay ambling down to dinner with you. Who is he?"

"I suppose you mean—" began Katie.

"Katie, don't sham. You know whom I mean.—Doesn't she, my small fatty?" (taking up Dottie, who had accompanied her sister, and kissing her). "You know who is Kate's new friend, don't you?"

"Es," said Dottie, promptly; "Misser C'ive. Me lites him so much. Him dave me a doll."

"You are a worse humbug than your sister.—Kate, how can you teach her to be such an abominable deceiver? Of course I don't mean Bernard Clive, *his* day is over but—"

"Mr. M'Kenzie, I suppose," said Kate, quietly; "I was going to say his name, if you had let me answer instead of Dottie."

"And now tell me who he is."

"I thought you wanted to know his name."

"No, my child, I knew that already; but *who* is he?"

"A gentleman."

"Kate, don't try to be terse; it's not your line; besides, it betrays you. I begin now to believe in some of Mrs. de Ponsonby's gossip."

"You didn't before then? Well, Bee, without knowing it I can tell you one thing for yourself: first thoughts are truest with women."

"Sounds like one of Bernard Clive's sayings—is it? Kate, you're an awful flirt."

"A *flirt*!" cried Kate, opening her big eyes with injured indignation. "Well, I did not think *you* would call me that; and with Mr. Clive, too, whom I would not flirt with to save my— Why, we—we *hate* one another. I don't know any one I dislike so heartily."

"Strong language, Kate!" said Lady Bee, laughing provokingly, as she drew her big firm fingers through the shining gold of Dottie's loose locks. "And does she hate and detest Mr. M'Kenzie as well, Fatima?"

"Katie lites Misser M'Kenzie; Eve says so. Eve an' me lites Misser C'ive," Dottie answered, volubly. "Him 'colds Katie, Eve says."

"Upon my word, young woman, you seem to be up in the domestic politics," laughed Lady Bee. "Scolds you, eh, Kate?"

"It is quite true," said Kate, scorning to deny, though her cheeks grew scarlet; "and remembering my meekness under scoldings at school, you may guess how fond I am of Mr. Clive. If Dick did not like him, I would never have let mamma ask him to the house; but I think Dick and he do care for one another."

"And Dick's tastes are still A 1?"

"Dick's tastes will always be A 1, as you call it, Bee," said Kate, good-humoredly. "Now, don't laugh at me; you've got no brother, and you don't understand Dick, or

you would know what an immense blessing it is to have him for one."

"Kate, you're a good little thing," said Lady Vanborough, meditatively.

"What! for loving Dick?" cried Kate, with one of her merry peals of laughter. "If one only requires that for canonization, it is easy to be a saint. I only wish he were a *little* older: old enough for you now, Bee—"

"Thank you for nothing," exclaimed her friend, with a most unaffected expression of horror. "Good heavens! I'm not proud, but I hope— There, I'm not going to make you angry, Katie."

"I hope not," said Kate, simply, "because I love you, also, and I should be very angry with any one who sneered at me for doing so."

This was a rebuke, and Bee Vanborough took it for one, declaring herself annihilated, and in need of immediate sherry and bitters to support her under her load of shame, with a variety of absurd gestures which made Dottie's blue eyes round with wonder, and Kate's cheeks rosy with confusion, but which did not prevent her from giving the latter an affectionate kiss the next moment, and telling her she was a "dear, good little fool, and then she liked her better for her folly than other people for their wisdom." Kate grew redder still at this, and felt inclined to argue out the subject; but Bee Vanborough was a nasty person to tackle in an argument; and, afraid that she might injure her hero more than exalt him, Kate chose the better part of valor, and held her tongue. Said Bee:

"Seriously, Kittie, I am glad Dick's friend doesn't rank with Dick in your affections; for I am afraid it would be 'love's labor lost.'"

"Bee dear," said Kate, wistfully, "Dottie *can* understand; and even if she couldn't, I hate that kind of talk—almost as much" (with a laugh) "as I hate its present subject."

"Spare your hatred, my child, for it won't lacerate his heart. That is otherwise disposed of."

"His *heart*!" (very scornfully), "I did not know he had such a thing. I never saw such a cold, insensible

man in my life. I don't think he has any warm feelings in him—except for a dead brother; I forgot that. He did speak of him once as if he loved him—and then, there's Dick, and perhaps mamma, he likes."

"And? Go on, Katie, that is three, and I can tell you a fourth."

"Who?"

"Mrs. Grey."

"Mrs.— Not your companion surely, Bee! Why I haven't seen her yet."

"And you won't now, because she is out; and she is very shy of seeing visitors into the bargain; but did not you know that Bernard Clive recommended her to me?"

"Mr. Clive! No," said Kate, with wide-open eyes; and then there flashed back upon her mind the evening when Clive had sounded her for her opinion of Lady Vanborough; and that subsequent one when the new companion's appearance had been the subject of conversation; Clive listening with apparent indifference till he threw in that casual word which damped Dick's ardor to see Lady Bee's phoenix. Looking back on it Kate felt rather warm. "He might have said something; but—oh! it was just like him."

"Oh, yes! he recommended her to me," said Lady Vanborough, "and most earnestly too: told me that she had been living with his people, and showed me letters from his father and a Canon Digby speaking of her in the highest terms. I assure you he quite took me into his confidence (Fancy Bernard Clive confidential!) and was quite eloquent on the subject; but love makes all men alike; and I must say he didn't give her more than her due. She is wonderfully nice; only she makes one so awfully afraid of her—I declare I quite feel on my P's and Q's when she's in the room."

"She must be wonderful indeed!" cried Kate, laughing heartily at the idea of any one—a companion especially—keeping Lady Bee in check.

"Well, I think better of Mr. Clive if he is capable of really loving any one, however unsuitable; and of course she must be a paragon of perfection for him to approve her."

"Kate, that is feminine spite."

"Yes, it is," owned Kate, after one little gasp at the accusation; "only I can't fancy him deigning to like any one the least imperfect or—"

"Why, bless my heart!" broke in Bee Vanborough, nearly tossing Dottie off her knee in the energy of the moment, "didn't you say he liked *Dick*? Good gracious! I am forgetting again"—as a pair of reproachful brown eyes met hers full—"I beg pardon. Go on."

"I was only going to say that, as he is so much with us at present, I think he need not have been so close—so—Why, I call it almost deceitful;" and Kate narrated the little incident aforementioned in a tone of indignation which sent Lady Vanborough into fits of laughing.

"My dearest Kittie, don't you know that it is a specialty of lawyers to draw you out without committing themselves? But I wonder you didn't guess anything from the way in which he dashed cold water on Dick's little desires. Not that I would have let the young man come here to look at my property. I dare say he was longing to punch your brother's head. Why—ha! ha! ha!—he must have thought it was bringing her from Scylla to Charybdis if he was to find rivals here."

"I do not think he need have been afraid of Dick," said Kate, a little haughtily. "We are rather ambitious for him; and a lady companion, however charming—but who was the Scylla?"

"Well, my dear, remember this is told in confidence."

"If it was told *you* in confidence, Bee, you had better not repeat it again."

"My child, your ultra-honorable scruples do you credit. He never said anything about my not telling you. Indeed, he said very little at all, only that little implied a good deal. It seems her husband, of whom she was devotedly fond, left her very badly off, poor thing! (an unpardonable sin in husbands, in my opinion; but that's not to the point) and that she lived with a spinster cousin, possessed of a nice little annuity, in a small cottage belonging to the Rev. Mr. Clive, Bernard's father. This cottage is almost attached to the rectory; and she won all

hearts at the latter place in a jiffy, most particularly that of Bernard's brother, who lives at home as his father's curate. In fact, they one and all thought so much of her, that when her cousin, an awful invalid, went to the other world, taking her annuity with her (in my opinion, Kate, people who buy annuities are the meanest and most selfish creatures in the world; but that's not to the point, either), the Clives insisted on her coming to the rectory and staying with them. She wanted (she is disgustingly proud, you know) to get a situation as companion or housekeeper at some country house at once; but naturally Mr. Philip Clive wouldn't hear of that, and egged on the others to persuade her into remaining with them, for a time at least. The rector is blind, you know, and Mrs. Grey used to read and write for him, so that the widowed daughter, who likes society, was left more free for it; and then she worked for and visited the poor for Mr. Philip, and taught the little girl, and sang for Bernard when he came down—in fact, became the most useful member of the family (you should see what a lot of things she does for me, and all with such a stately sort of sweetness), and was looked on as quite one of them until the curate went and proposed. Bernard was in London. He only runs down for flying visits to Woodleigh; and Mr. Philip took advantage of the coast being clear to try his luck and—*fail!* ”

“She preferred the other, then?” said Kate, interested, as all girls are, in a love-story. “How disagreeable the brother must be!”

“That is a matter of taste, my child. I like Bernard Clive. At any rate, Philip was refused, and wouldn't—positively wouldn't—take his refusal: went half crazy on the subject, declaring he would follow her everywhere, when she said she would leave Woodleigh unless he desisted, and persecuting her with tears, threats, and entreaties, till at last she fairly bolted—chose a day when he had gone to preach a charity sermon at the nearest town, and the sister—who, oddly enough, rather took his part—was somewhere else, and quietly walked off with her few possessions, bidding good-bye to the rector at the

last moment and without saying where she was going, and merely leaving a very grateful farewell letter for the others. Young Clive traced her easily to a town about five miles off, and there lost the clue, and has never regained it (I believe one of those passionate entreaties which appear addressed to 'A. G. Myrtles,' in the second column of the *Times* every now and then, is from him), and I dare say he would be ready to kill Bernard if he knew that gentleman was acquainted with her whereabouts—"

"But he will have to know some day," broke in Kate. "I do not like the brother, Bee. If she prefers Bernard, he ought to have yielded directly. Persecuting a woman is not love. It is not even manly. I am vexed with Mr. Clive, too. Seeing that his brother, who knew her first, loved her so passionately, he ought to have kept out of her way. He ought never even to have *let* her love him. I would not come between Eve and any one she cared for. Bee, it is very unkind of you to laugh at me. You have no brothers and sisters, so you do not know. They are not a nice family. I would not like to be one of them."

"'Nobody asked you, sir,' she said," sang Lady Bee, in her full, clear voice, and with a most provoking accent. "Kate, your notions are beautifully fresh and green; but 'wait a wee,' as the Scotch say. They won't wash. No man living, if he honestly loves a woman, and is loved by her, will give her up, and 'let concealment prey upon his what-you-may-call-'em cheek,' because his brother happens to have taken a mad fancy for her."

"Not unless he should chance to love his brother more than the woman, I suppose?" said Kate. "I dare say you are right, Bee. I don't profess to know much about such things yet; but still, I don't think any the better of Mr. Clive for not openly claiming her, instead of hiding it up. I can't bear secrets—secrets among families especially. He ought to marry her at once if he is going to do it at all, and then she would be protected from every one. I can't think why he doesn't, or why he lets her be a companion."

"I expect she has some voice in that matter, my dear. She *says* she won't marry at all."

"But I don't understand. I thought you implied they were engaged."

"Not publicly. Oh, no! I don't think it has come to that; but they make very little concealment of their regard for one another; and I expect he is pretty sure of his success. Indeed, why otherwise should she have sent for him when she fled from Philip, and made him her confidant and *cavalier servante*? But some widows, you know, like holding out and protesting unalterable devotion to the dear departed, till the very day that they are led to the altar by the dear *secundus*."

"Then it is very silly of them," said Kate, with youthful severity, "and I don't think much of your beautiful heroine for giving all this useless pain and trouble for the sake of such a folly. If I loved any one, and he asked me to marry him, I should say, 'Yes, please,' at once, and jump for joy when he was gone. Why don't you speak to her, Bee, and tell her—"

"Speak to her!" cried Bee Vanborough, again subjecting Dottie to the shuttlecock process, until that much-enduring little damsel looked as if she were experiencing a storm at sea. "But you haven't seen Averil Grey, or you wouldn't ask that question. Why, I would no more speak to her about her private affairs unless she introduced them, than take the Queen to task for wearing the abominably shabby bonnets she does. I'm bold enough in general, but there *are* lengths to which 'colonial bishops cannot go' (*vide* 'Bab' ballads). She's the most reserved and the most companionable woman you ever met—will talk of Woodleigh, the rector, and all of them, for an hour, without ever giving you an idea of the young man's admiration of herself; and will hardly ever allude to the husband she adored, though I'm sure I'm always telling her of poor dear Vanborough—when I can think of anything about him to tell her, at least. No; we are going off on a quiet little trip to Norway in the summer, and I shouldn't be surprised if we met Bernard Clive somewhere among the woods and fjords. In that

case of course I shall ask him to join us. Mrs. Grey will say nothing, and look neutrally remonstrating; and the end of it will be that just as I've grown not to know what to do without her, she will calmly tell me she is going to be married next week, and I shall have to give them a wedding-breakfast, and say, 'B-b-bless you, my children,' with the best grace I can."

"Me's had my betfast an' my dinner too, me's had," said Dottie, suddenly growing tired of playing audience and striking into the dialogue. "Me has bed an' milt for my betfast, an' nurse puts sudar in when me's dood—bwown sudar. Does oo lite bwown sudar?"

"Better than any other delicacy in the world," Lady Vanborough answered, clasping her hands in the fervor of her acquiescence. "Hark! isn't that the bell? Now commence my visitors and my visitors' twaddle. Well, Kate, what are you fidgiting for?"

"I was looking to see whether Dick was coming," said Kate, coming back from an excursion to the window. "He promised to call for me at a quarter past three; and I came early that I might have a talk with you before your visitors came."

Lady Vanborough laughed.

"The last thing that most of my visitors desire! I have an 'at home' to-day, and they come to it; but they don't want to see me, and I don't want to see them. Mrs. A. comes that she may say, 'I always go to Lady Vanborough's Fridays.' It's the handle she cares about, not the name or the person. Mrs. B. because I can get hold of professional singers, and she likes hearing good music gratis. Miss C. to meet Mr. D.; and Mr. D. to meet Miss C. It's not for me, bless you, or my society, that my house gets filled so full that— Ah! Mrs. Delamayne, how d'you do? How is your sister? Last time I saw her she was flirting so abominably on Lady Peacock's stairs with young Dalziels that— Mr. de Ponsonby, how do *you* do? When are you going to come of age again, and collect another delightful crowd, to dance with each other and make believe it is for your sake?—Mrs. van Doorn, you don't mean to say you've

come again without your husband, when you know how fond—I am of him, and that I only ask you on his account!—How are you, Mr. Bellew? You look awfully seedy. At the opera last night? More shame for you then. I never go in Lent, or till the week after Easter, on principle (they never have anything worth hearing till then). Come for your sister? Oh, nonsense! I'm not going to let her go. I like her a great deal better than I do you."

"But I must go now," said Kate, coming forward to her brother's rescue. (He was not fond of Lady Vanborough's jokes). "I promised mamma to be back by half-past three. Eve is very unwell. That is why I brought Dottie out, for we don't know if she is sickening for anything; and Miss Smith left yesterday for her Easter holidays; so good-bye."

"Good-bye, my child," said Bee, kissing her. "You've meanly escaped telling me anything about—you know who. Never mind, if Eve is going to have the small-pox, or anything (which Heaven forbid!) you'll have to come here out of the way, and I shall hear all about it.—Mr. Bellew, please tell your friend Clive that now his recess has come he has no excuse for avoiding my Fridays. I haven't got the plague."

And then at last the young Bellews got away, and found themselves on the stairs. A tall lady in black was coming up at the same time, and put out a quick, kindly hand to save Dottie from stumbling.

"Dat's a pwetty lady," said Dottie, with infantine frankness, and tugging at Kate's hand to attract her attention; and Kate, glancing upwards with a smile of thanks, looked admiringly into one of the fairest and noblest faces she had ever seen.

CHAPTER XIII.

A PRIVATE VIEW.

“IT must have been the companion,” said Kate, as they turned into the street, where a bright sun and strong breeze caught little Dottie’s hair, and blew it about like sparks of gold. Dick had to put a hand to his hat before answering.

“What companion? Oh! Bee Vanborough’s! Nonsense! Clive said she was as ugly as sin. By the way, Kittie, I can’t think how you, who are sensible enough in general, can put up with a woman like that. I never heard such a confounded clack in all my life. I do think she thinks of all the rudest things beforehand that she can say, and then says them.”

It seemed poor Kate’s fate to hear her favorites abusing one another; and I fear Bee would hardly have been satisfied with her championship in this case; for she only gave a little sigh and said, resignedly:

“She does not mean it, Dick; it’s only her way.”

“Then I wish to Heaven she’d amend her ways,” said Dick, petulantly. “Look here, what have we got this brat with us for? I’ve got a card for the private view of —’s Academy pictures; and I thought you would like to go with me; but I’m not going to drag a parcel of children at my heels.”

“Poor little parcel!” said Kate, looking down with a merry laugh at the tiny woman trotting along at her side, in happy unconsciousness of her brother’s objection to her presence. “I’m afraid I must take her home now, anyhow, or she’ll be tired. Couldn’t we go to-morrow?”

"No, he sends it in to-morrow. Well, we shall have to go out again after leaving the little bother at home. I mustn't be later than four, or M'Kenzie will think I'm not coming."

"Oh! it is he," said Kate, with a sudden recollection of having expressed her admiration of ——'s pictures to Mr. M'Kenzie a few days previously. "How very kind he is! I hope mamma will not want me."

Mamma did not. When did Lady Margaret want one of her children, unless that one desired to be with her? Their pleasure was her law; and just now she was looking anxious and preoccupied.

"I'm afraid Eve is going to be seriously ill; her throat is so sore, and she is terribly feverish. No, my love, you can be no good. She can't bear any one in the room; and I would rather not have you in the way till I know what it is. Go with Dick by all means; he will be out of mischief then;" and with a heavy sigh, and her cap dangling on one side of her head, Lady Margaret went away again to her sick child. Kate came downstairs looking depressed.

"I hope Eve is not going to be really ill," she said, with a very dolorous face, as Dick helped her into the hansom which was waiting at the door; and her brother pooh-poohed the notion, reminding her that Eve was always ailing.

"Those pecky people always make much more fuss than is necessary. Why, *I've* got a thundering headache at this moment, only I don't say anything about it."

This, of course, was meant to be unanswerable; so beyond an expression of pity for the headache, Kate said nothing; but, all the same, her mind would revert to Eve, and remained there until the hansom drew up with a jerk in front of a low wall with a door in it, and straggling, yellow-blossomed creepers hanging over the top on to the outside: a wall which shut in one of those small, quaint-looking old houses in faded red brick, which still exist in Kensington; and outside which a gentleman was pacing to and fro, as if waiting for some one.

It was Mr. M'Kenzie, and as he came forward with a

bright, pleased smile on his dark face, Kate forgot about the home anxieties. She was very young, you see, only nineteen; and to her mind this stranger had *even* a sweeter face than Dick's (!) [N. B. I mention this comparison to show you that Kate's ideas of beauty were not always founded on strictly artistic principles. Yet it was true that just now that animated Southern face looked wonderfully handsome, relieved against the mingled reds and ochres of the old wall, with its dainty tracing of green leafage hanging over it, and the blue sky drifted with white above.]

The very street was washed clean by recent rains, and dried to a country whiteness in the fresh spring breeze; and in the neighboring gardens the may was all breaking into white and rosy blossom. In another week, and while its country sisters were as yet barely budded with green, it would be so snowed over with perfumed color, that the vivid emerald of the leaves, now so beautiful, would be lost altogether.

"What a lovely Easter!" Mr. M'Kenzie said, as he assisted Kate to alight. "Certainly, even London is beautiful in some seasons. No, you have not kept me waiting. I gave your brother the ticket in case I should arrive before or after you; but the day is too fine to be wasted in-doors. Kind of me! How can you say so? It was a kindness to myself; for I so seldom meet with any one who really and heartily cares for art as I do myself; and you seem to enjoy it even more keenly. I think"—with a sigh and a look half-kind, half-curious—"you enjoy everything. It is very pleasant."

"I do," said Kate; "I enjoy things *dreadfully*. Don't you?"—a pitiful appreciation in her tone of the sadness of his.

"Not now. I did once; but I seem to have used up enjoyment, and pain too, since then. The greatest pleasure I have now"—and his smile was very pleasant as he said it—"is to do what I can in contributing to the enjoyment of those young enough to take it, and blossom brightly over it as you do—and as that may-tree does in the sunshine. No sun has much effect on that withered

sycamore-tree in the corner, you see; and yet I suppose even it has been green and pleasant in its day."

Kate did not think Mr. M'Kenzie looked much like a withered sycamore; yet she felt sorry for him somehow. It was not only the sad tone in his voice, but he looked as though the storms had come into his life and laid it bare at some time or another. All the more reason, she thought, for appreciating the pleasant brightness and verdure which remained. He was rather fond of talking in allegories, and she liked it. You would not have thought there was an ounce of poetry in Kate's whole nature; but there was, although it was hidden rather deep, and did not often rise to the surface. Indeed, she was rather ashamed of it herself; and certain old copy-books and untidy quires of paper filled with blotted verses, and wonderfully youthful romances, were stowed snugly away in a boot-closet in her room, where no eye but her own and Dick's had ever seen them: not his since he had grown up and become a man. Unpublished contributions to the over-published world of literature they were, which she often glanced lovingly over even now; and now and then added to by a few lines, generally written when she was either out of spirits or too excited for prose: verses which would have made you die with laughter to read; only Kate took very good care no one should read them. Mr. M'Kenzie, she thought, talked as if he could write poetry too—good poetry—and yet would not despise those blurred, over-exalté effusions of hers in the boot-closet. They were her pet and only secret; and yet, though she had known this stranger only one fortnight, she felt as if she would have minded his discovering them less than any of her oldest friends.

Just now he was putting her in the best place for seeing one of the principal pictures to appear in that year's Academy; foraging for a chair for her lest she should be tired; and keeping close at her side, that he might tell her the names of the dozen or so of notorieties who had also got permission for a private view of the great work.

"That tall thin woman, with the dark intellectual face

and graceful manner, is Miss Antonia S——, the American contralto; and that other dark, vivacious, flighty little woman, is the popular novelist, whose last book I found on your table last Thursday. That eccentric, pre-Raphaelite-looking little creature, with the slashed gown, and flame-colored feathers round her head, is the wife of a water-color artist, and dresses after his mediæval conceptions. Don't you wonder she dare face the London *gamins* without getting hooted? And that pretty, lady-like-looking girl, is Miss C——, the principal actress at the 'Parnassus.'"

"You know every one," said Kate, whose eyes were eager with interest; "and yet you have been such a little while in London. I wonder how you manage it. We seem to be the only people who are nothing particular in the room. Do you know, it makes me feel terribly insignificant."

"Does it?" said Mr. M'Kenzie, smiling. "You look—but I am not going to tell you how you look; only old privileged friends may always speak truths. Look at this instead," and he brought her a small vase full of feather-flowers most exquisitely made and grouped. Kate admired them. They were very curious.

"To good to be put on the same table with this?" and he took up a glass containing a single freshly-plucked spray of acacia-blossoms, white as snow and sweet as honey.

"Oh!" said Kate, and plunged her little nose delightfully into the flowers. "How lovely! how fresh!"

"So I think," said M'Kenzie, smiling still. "I prefer them. Things fresh and sweet are always better than rarities in my opinion."

Kate made no answer, but buried her nose the deeper, feeling angry with herself because her rebellious cheeks would give token that she understood. I think he saw the annoyance, but was not sure at whom it was directed. At any rate, he moved quietly away, and began talking to their host; and before he came back, Dick was at his sister's side, suggesting that they should go. Poor Dick! he soon got tired of pictures, or anything that was not

exciting ; and the actress, the only person present whom he knew, was surrounded by a group of favored acquaintances, and merely honored him with the briefest of nods. Dick, who had seen her often before, and once or twice behind the scenes, was huffed, and carried off his sister before she felt at all inclined for a move.

Mr. M'Kenzie went with them, and a hansom being out of the question for three, they all walked home very contentedly ; even Mr. Bellew recovering his good temper in the sweet air and sunshine. Kate thought Mr. M'Kenzie had never made himself so pleasant. Reverting from the feather-flowers to Mexico, he talked about his travels there, breaking off to tell of a bear-fight in the Rocky Mountains, and one among the California diggings. He seemed to have been everywhere in the New World ; and Kate, who had never read Bret Harte, and still cherished a youthful affection for Mayne Reid, listened with parted lips and radiant eyes, a very child in her pleasure at being "told a story." It was pleasant talking to such an eager listener, looking down now and then into the lifted rosy face, and provoking the little impetuous half-questions and broken comments : pleasant, even to a man who tried to persuade himself that he had done with pleasure. Dallas M'Kenzie had known what love was in his younger life, and had repented him of the knowledge so bitterly that he had never thought even to like a girl heartily again ; but he could not help liking Kate, and he acknowledged it.

A faint mist was rising, and behind it the sun, like a blood-red hand, pointed a fiery path between the trees in Hyde Park, and tinged the under side of the leaves and twigs with flame. Long streaks of violet cloud, lined with red, floated across the western sky. It was getting late, Kate thought, as she saw their shadows lengthly and crooked on the pavement before them.

They were just reaching the house, and a little chill ran through her ; for the face of the page, who opened the door, was as long as a coffin.

Her voice was quite faint with inward misgiving, as she asked M'Kenzie if he would come in, and there was

such an anxious inquiry in her large eyes that Buttons answered as if addressed :

"Miss Eve is much worse, miss; very bad indeed; and the doctor's coming again in the evening."

And Kate had been enjoying herself! Poor girl! she staggered a little with the shock, and her face grew so pale that Mr. M'Kenzie put out his hand, and took hers as if to support her.

"Do not look so alarmed," he said, kindly, almost as though he were speaking to a child; "it may be only a slight attack. The doctor will give a better report in the evening, and you mustn't lose heart before you hear it."

The friendly tone, the warm friendly clasp, brought back the blood again into her cheeks.

"Thank you," she said, gratefully, the ready tears starting to her eyes; "you are very kind. Will you come to-morrow and hear how she is?"

"I will come every day until you can give me good news, and that, I hope, won't be long," he answered, smiling; "only keep up your spirits now," and then he gave her fingers a final cordial squeeze and went away.

Dick had been speaking to the page, and now followed Kate upstairs with a very lugubrious face.

"I say, Kittie, Tom says it is scarlet fever. That's infectious, you know, and they say a fellow may have it any number of times—I wish to goodness I'd stayed at Oxford. It may be in the air even here. Look here, you know, I'm not going to stay in the house with anything catching."

— "I will go to mamma and see," said Kate, gently. Were there times when even her love failed to bridge over the gulf of Dick's selfishness?

It *was* infectious—a particularly bad case of scarlet fever, the doctor said; and Lady Margaret—in an equal agony of alarm for the sick child above, and the well children below—forbade Kate all share in the nursing, and exiled all but herself and the nurse from the floor where Eve was invalided. The others were packed downstairs as they best could be, Dick having a bed made up in the schoolroom. It was not a very comfortable apartment,

but being further from the disease than anywhere else—except the kitchen—he kindly refrained from grumbling more than a little. After all it was only a temporary arrangement. The doctor himself recommended that all but the invalid and those in attendance on her should be sent out of the house as speedily as possible; and on the following day Lady Margaret, well soaked in camphorated spirits, but in a lamentably disheveled condition as to hair and attire, called Kate into her room to consult about the when and where of departure.

“But not me, mamma,” said Kate, eagerly, “I have had it.”

“My dear child, that is nothing. You might take it again.”

“But, mamma, is it likely? and I am not a bit afraid, and could help you so much in nursing poor Evey. Do let me stay, mother dear. Bee Vanborough wrote to me to-day, asking me to come to her, and bring Dottie, as Mrs. Grey is very fond of children; but I said, ‘No, I wouldn’t leave you on any account.’”

“But you must leave me, Kate. The doctor says so. Don’t give trouble about it, love,” Lady Margaret said, wistfully, “I don’t know whether I am standing on my head or heels as it is, and if you were laid up too—but that is nonsense. You must all go away at once.”

“Dick is going to Mr. Clive,” said Katie. “He asked him at once; and Mr. M’Kenzie wants us to let him take George. He says he has lots of room for him, and is very fond of boys. Is it not kind of Mr. M’Kenzie, mamma?”

“It is kinder of Bernard Clive, who has only one room, and has offered that to Dick,” said Lady Margaret, gravely. “Unfortunately, however, that is the very thing—Kate, would you think me very unkind—both of you, I mean—if I said, ‘Don’t go to Bee Vanborough or Bernard Clive?’”

“Why, mamma,” said Kate, wondering. “I have already refused to go to Bee. I want to stay here.”

“My love, you can’t stay here. Pray don’t say any more about that. If only for Dick’s sake, I should want

you to go away, so that he may not be alone. Kate, it will never do, his staying in London during the season. It is bad enough at home; but there in the Temple, within reach of every gaiety and dissipation, it would never do. I have been racking my brain for the last week, to think of some plan for getting him out of London. Only the day before yesterday he came for more money, and I had given him ten pounds the week before. Where it had gone, Heaven knows; the poor dear boy gets so cross if one asks him the least question. And then Uncle Theo. is quite furious about his being here. He declares that the unfortunate child got himself rusticated on purpose to be up for the whole season, and that unless I s-send him away at once he w-won't give you one bit of help or kindness in the future—none of you."

Lady Margaret began to weep.

"Uncle Theo. is so hard, so **wickedly hard** on poor Dick," cried Kate, kneeling down by her mother and kissing her fondlingly. "He can't understand him; and I don't see what right he has to make you cry, and order us about. Help, indeed! Let him not help," cried the young lady, with lofty independence, nestling her head on to her mother's shoulder the while; "we can do without him."

"Can we?" said Lady Margaret, laughing sadly. "I'm afraid, Katie, you're rather mistaken. We should do very badly without your uncle's help; and he is quite right. It is doing harm to Dick himself to keep him idling here. If we could only find some nice place where he could read! There is a village—"

"I *don't* think he would like it, mamma," Kate interrupted, with a shake of the head, as if that settled the matter.

"Not alone, my love; but if you were to go, too. The dear boy is very fond of you, you know; and listen, Katie. My maid's sister lets lodgings in Combe Regis—did you ever hear of it?—a little village on the sea-coast, between Devonshire and Somerset. It is a lovely place, with good boating and fishing (only, for Heaven's sake,

don't get drowned)—beautiful walks; and the rooms vacant now, so that you could go at once."

"Dick is fond of fishing—and boating," Kate put in, deliberately. "We might make him like it, mamma."

"Thank you, love; and show him your uncle's letter. He would not like his allowance cut off. It is hard to send you away just at the beginning of the season,"—and Lady Margaret stroked her girl's bright cheek fondly—"but you will go to please me—won't you?"

"The season might go to Jericho for all I care," said Kate, ungracefully; "I would *like* to stay and nurse Eve; but, of course, if it will please you—"

"I could not send Madge and Dottie with Dick, even if he would take them," replied Lady Margaret. "Of course you must go. My only difficulty now is about George. There are only two bed-rooms in the cottage, and an attic, which will hold the maid and Dottie. One is large enough for you and Madge; but Martin says the other is so small, she is afraid Mr. Dick would not like to take—"

"Oh no," said Kate, shaking her head even more decisively; "Dick wouldn't stay a day unless he had a room to himself; but Mr. M'Kenzie is really anxious to have George. He said so, and I am sure he means what he says."

Lady Margaret looked doubtful. Mr. M'Kenzie was very nice, and of course it was most kind, but they knew him so little. However, as there was no time to be lost, Kate had better write a pretty note to thank him and accept the offer. "And then you had better write about the lodgings being ready for you to-morrow; and tell Bessie and Martin to pack your things."

"If only I had not to go!" Katie said, her brown eyes filling. "I know I must; but, oh, it would be so dreadful if Eve were to get worse, and I be away or—"

"Don't you think it is wiser not to fancy such things?" said Lady Margaret, fondly. "Katie, I won't have you kissing me in this way. I'm not sure that it's safe at all. Go down and tell Dick about it now. Tell him he is *wanted* to take care of you all, and that you couldn't go without him. He can't refuse."

He did not. Lady Margaret was right, although she spoke in a doubtful tone, and though he was by no means willing to leave London, and so savage on the subject that Kate was obliged to bring out Uncle Theo.'s cruel letter as a last resource, whereupon Master Dick began to reconsider the matter; and finally, after much talking and disagreeability, submitted.

"Wholly on the girls' account," he told Clive, taking a very high and magnanimous view of the matter. "My mother says she can't send them to Devonshire unless I go to take care of them; and so of course I've had to agree. It's a beastly bore, confound it all! Just at the beginning of the season too! But of course a fellow can't refuse."

"I should hope not," said Clive, coolly. "Then you go to-day. Well, Dick, you couldn't have a better place for studying in."

"Oh! hang study! What's the good of it? I shall never even get a second, and I don't care about coming out with the ruck. I wouldn't keep my name on the books another day if it were not for Uncle Theo. I suppose the old brute would stop my allowance directly if I left."

"I am busy now," said Clive, striving to bury a large amount of disgust among the papers by which he was surrounded.

"You are always busy," retorted Dick, not taking the hint, but continuing to lounge against the mantel-piece. "I say, do you never stop that eternal treadmill of yours?"

"Not often," said Clive, drily; "I tread mills for my living, remember."

He might have said, "for your living, remember," since it was he who had taken on him Dick's debt, and was now working harder than usual to get clear of it; but if a disagreeable, he was not an ungenerous man; and refrained from all such speech, going on with his writing instead.

Dick called him a "penurious old hunk," and began teasing him to pay them a visit at Combe Regis. He knew he should get bored to death there without a soul to speak to.

"Isn't your elder sister going with you?" Clive asked.

"Of course. Didn't I tell you I had to look after the girls?"

"Yes—but I fancied Miss Bellew might be remaining at home to help her mother with the nursing."

"Thank you!" cried Dick; "and I look after the brats! Not quite such a fool!"

"I am really so busy now, I must turn you out," said Clive; "but I will try and run down to Combe Regis while you are there, if you want me."

And then Dick did take his elbow off the mantel-piece, and reluctantly departed.

"I wonder if I shall knock that young fellow down some day," thought the barrister, as the door closed; "I've had five minds to do it this afternoon. Such an incarnation of Self surely never lived before. And so she is running away from the infection too. I thought that family affection was strong enough in her to have kept her to nurse her sick sister. Probably, like her brother, she is only bemoaning her ill-fate in missing the season. What a fool I am to trouble my head about them at all; and yet there are the elements of good in her, if one could only get at them. I believe any one she loved could do what he liked with her.—Who's that? Didn't I tell you I was engaged?—Why, Philip, what on earth has brought you up?"

CHAPTER XIV.

PHILIP CLIVE.

PHILIP CLIVE came in quickly, putting the boy, who had tried somewhat ineffectually to bar his entrance, aside with one firm, quick hand, and holding out the other to his brother, who grasped it warmly.

"What a time it is since I've seen you! and how ill you are looking, old fellow!" Bernard said, still holding his hand, after the first exclamation of greeting; and then he looked searchingly into the face which bore so strong a family likeness to his own, but which had a haggard, feverish look on it, plainly discernible in the pale yellow sunlight then streaming on it over the office blinds.

Bernard read the meaning there quickly enough, and sighed as he did so. It was wonderful to see the close, warm affection of this cynical and disagreeable man for his own family—the family who gave him so much trouble, and so little of anything else. You could even see it in the way in which he dragged a big leathern armchair into the sunniest corner near the window, tossing the books which encumbered it on to the floor, and pressing his brother into it, before proceeding to rummage in a cupboard near the fireplace for wine and other refreshments. And yet all the while he knew that Philip Clive had come up to town simply and solely to give him fresh trouble, by insisting on continuing a search for the woman whose widowhood and privacy he was protecting.

"Which will you take—brandy and soda, or Madeira?"

"I've a bottle of very decent Madeira here," he went on, hospitably. "You look as if you wanted something, young man."

"Do I?" said Philip. It was the first word he had said beyond a bare greeting; and before he added more, he poured himself out a glass of stiffish brandy and water, and drained it off at a gulp. "I've had no breakfast to-day—none to speak of, that is. No! don't ring," as the lawyer lifted his hand to a bell. "I couldn't eat if it was put before me. What do you think I have come up for?"

"As I suppose you are going to tell me, I'll save myself the trouble of thinking," said Bernard, laughing. "What?"

"I fancy I have got a clue to Averil Grey, at last."

"In-deed!"

Bernard had been moving about the room, poking the fire and making it blaze brightly; but now he pulled a chair forward, his back to the light, his keen blue eyes upon his brother's face.

"First tell me how my father is," he said, cheerfully.

"The governor? Oh! pretty well. Sent his love and— But I was going to tell you of Averil—Mrs. Grey. Where do you think she came from before we knew her?"

"From Dr. Dunn, at Hastings. I thought you were aware of that."

"Of course I am. I mean before that."

"From London; at least, so the Digbys told Harriet; and I have heard Mrs. Grey say the same."

"The Digbys said they thought so—that was all. She had talked of London to them, and she talked of it to us, as though she had lived there all her life; and yet she had not—not for more than a year or eighteen months before she went to Hastings."

"How do you know?"

"Not from the Duns, though I have made close inquiries; but—"

"One moment, my dear Philip! Don't be affronted; but I thought you loved Averil Grey."

"You thought right then."

"Surely it is no proof of affection to go about making her name public, and perhaps giving people to think that she has done something wrong or disgraceful, by these inquiries about her."

"I am not affronted," said Philip, with a sort of resigned impatience in his manner, "because you don't understand what you are talking of. If you did, you would know that the very fact of my loving her as I do, would make me more than careful to guard her name from the very breath of suspicions such as you describe. I represent myself as looking for her on account of some property which might be hers, and which has come to our knowledge, and which I, being, please remember, one of the clergymen of her parish, am authorized to acquaint her with. You forget that my profession—"

"Yes, I'm afraid I forgot you in your clerical capacity," Bernard interrupted, smiling; "go on with what you were saying you had found out."

"Well, it was in rather an odd way—a letter from the landlady of a lodging-house in—"

"London!" Bernard broke in; and then bit his lips for vexation at having done so.

"No," said Philip; "Southampton. Odd, wasn't it? I don't wonder you look surprised. It was in answer to one of my advertisements which had found its way on an old paper to the good lady's hands; and it informed me that a lady, whose initials corresponded with those I gave, and who had resided not long before at 'The Myrtles,' Woodleigh, had lodged with her three years previously: and that she would be happy to give me any information respecting her, for—a consideration, of course. Those sort of letters always end that way."

"A consideration which regards £ s. d. more than truth," Bernard observed. "Well, did you answer this letter?"

"Yes, in person. Ah! you stare; but sitting still in that dead-alive village, when I don't even know where the person I love best is hiding, is maddening me; and I thought I could extract a larger amount of truth by *viva voce* examination than if I only wrote."

"Philip," said his brother, kindly, "this sort of thing will never do. I wondered what made you look so thin and worn when you first came in; I don't wonder at all now. Racing down to Hastings and back, ditto to Southampton, ditto to London—you will wear yourself out if you go on in this way; and how does your parish work get done?"

"If I don't find Averil Grey I care very little for wearing myself out, or parish work either," said the curate, doggedly. He was leaning back in his arm-chair, a feverish glow in his cheeks, and his two hands knotted fiercely over his knee. In front of him was the window, open, with the sunlight falling on his thin face, and a fresh spring breeze from the river rumpling the light hair upon his forehead, and making a rustling disturbance among the papers on the table. Outside the sky was dappled all over with small cream-white clouds; and the birds were singing and chirruping in the Temple Gardens, where beds of crocuses and hyacinths made bands of pure, pale color in a setting of dark brown earth, moist from recent rains. Every now and then little gales of perfume penetrated the dim, quiet room, and made a sweetness among musty books and legal-looking documents tied with pink tape. A couple of nurses were chattering on the walk far below, and before them romped a little flock of children, gold-haired and rosy-cheeked, whose merry voices rang bell-like over the City sounds, and made a musical accompaniment to the dialogue of the two brothers.

Bernard laid his hand gently on his brother's knee. "Go on," he said, "I will talk to you afterwards. Finish you your say first. You went to Southampton?"

"And found the woman. She seems a very respectable body; keeps a nice, comfortable lodging-house; and told me at once that her servant was a Loamshire girl, and comes from Woodleigh—(she's a daughter of Jane Parsons, the one that left the village five or six years ago, and went to service. Don't you remember her?) Well, last Whitsuntide the girl went home for a holiday, saw the ladies at the Myrtles, and recognized them at once

as having lodged with her mistress a couple of years previously. I don't think she spoke to either Averil or poor Miss Clewer, but when she went back she told the landlady of the circumstance. A few weeks ago a paper, wrapped round something I think, came into the kitchen, and one of my old advertisements caught her eye: 'A. G. Myrtles is earnestly requested to send her address, or communicate with the curate at Woodleigh, on a matter of great importance.' Up went Sarah to her mistress:

"Look 'ere, m'm, this is parson's son, Mr. Philip, a-looking for our lady surely. She must ha' left t' cottage."

"Like she's come into some money, an' he wants to give it her; or she's not paid her rent, an' he wants to get it," said the landlady. "Perhaps ther'll be a reward offered in a later paper."

"So they set to work and ferreted out the rest of the back numbers after that advertisement, found that one where I begged any one who knew the present address of 'A. G., late of Myrtles, Woodleigh,' to send it to me, in order that I might communicate with her on business to her own advantage, and forthwith wrote the letter to me I mentioned to you. I went down to Southampton straight, expecting to find Averil there, or at all events to learn where she is; and found that after all they knew no more of that than I do—indeed she knew very little at all about her."

"Ah!" said Bernard, "I thought not. I have no doubt, though, she made as much of it as she could, in order to fleece you to the greatest possible extent. Well?"

"Well, the first thing she said was that when Averil and her cousin came to her, they had only just landed in England, and brought a French maid with them: a middle-aged woman, Mrs. Rendall said, 'not one of your flighty French damsels,' but a decent, grave body, extremely reserved on the subject of her mistresses, and speaking very bad English when she spoke at all. Still the woman doesn't live that can refrain from gossiping altogether, and mamzelle (as Mrs. Rendall called her) did let out that she had never been in England before; and that she

had been Averil's maid for the last ten years—since madame was quite a young girl, she said. She was almost broken-hearted then because she was going to leave her, but madame's circumstances would no longer allow her to keep a lady's-maid, and therefore she was going to set up a milliner's shop in London. 'I can at least make the bonnets of madame,' she said.—Now, Bernard, why did Averil never tell us that she had only recently come to England, and had lived in France for years?"

"We have not heard that the latter was the case as yet," said Bernard, quietly. "You jump to conclusions on slender premises, Master Phil."

"Why, have I not told you that the maid was French, had never been in England before; and that, though most of the labels on the trunks had been torn off except the last ones, 'Cork to Southampton,' one still remained, and bore the name of a French town?"

"What town?"

"That is just what Mrs. Rendall forgets. She says she couldn't 'perounce' it at the time; but it was in three words and the middle one was 'sur.' Mamzelle had most likely got the box though, for it was one of hers; and mamzelle could most probably give me Mrs. Grey's address now; for she knew everything about her mistress, adored her, and confided to Mrs. Rendall that madame was an angel, and had suffered terribly from her husband during his life. In what way, or what *he* was, mamzelle wouldn't say, having evidently been bound to secrecy on that point; but she evidently detested him, for she groaned and crossed herself at the mention of his name, and said that his crime, whatever it was, made it well for madame and every one connected with her to forget that he had ever existed. Mrs. Rendall said that her mistress, being so handsome, would probably get a better husband before long; but mamzelle only groaned and crossed herself again, and said it would be well if Heaven were so kind; but that 'miserable one' would stand even in the way of a better match.—Now, Bernard," said Philip, breaking off with a glance of triumph, "do you see what I am coming to?"

"Not exactly, I confess."

"Then the same idea has not flashed across both our minds."

"Mine is perfectly idea-less—not a flash in it."

"You are joking, as usual," said Philip, angrily. "And yet you might take some slight interest, even in a matter uninteresting to yourself, when you know that it is life and death to me."

"And do I not?" Bernard asked. "You might laugh all day, and I should not doubt your interest in Averil Grey. It is deeds, not words, Phil., which prove a man's feelings."

"I beg your pardon, old fellow. It is good-natured of you to give up your work for me; but, you see, I've got half crazy about this, and I thought that if I told you all I heard, and just how I heard it, the same notion might strike you as has struck me?"

"And that is?"

"That Mr. Grey—if that is the real name—has done something, committed some crime, by which he has incurred the severest penalties of the law; and that Averil, having escaped from the scene of his shame, is sacrificing her whole life to the memory of it, lest in any way it might be brought upon the head of others, more especially others who had been kind to her—who loved her, and who, she knew, were proud to a fault of their own good name and stainless antecedents."

Philip had leaned forward, his face flushed, his voice quick and low. Bernard drew back, his lips tightly compressed, and his eyebrows drawn together, like a man who has just had a totally new idea suggested to him, and does not know how to take it, or whether to take it at all.

"The severest penalty of the law is death," he said, at last. "That means hanging; and hanging means *murder*! Philip, is it likely?"

"It is not unlikely. Think how often murder is committed, and through how many causes—jealousy, passion, what you will. Indeed, Mrs. Rendall said to the maid once, 'Why, you couldn't seem more in 'orror of your pore master if 'e'd murdered anybody;' and the woman

looked dreadfully frightened, and begged Mrs. Rendall not to take up what she had said, or think of it any more, or madame would never forgive her. And after that she would never say a word more on the subject. But, Bernard, I don't say he has been hanged, mind you, though it is not impossible. He may have been only sentenced to imprisonment, and died before his time was out; or he may have escaped, and died in hiding. There are many more disgraceful crimes than murder, and yet gentlemen have committed them. But—my God! to think of Averil, so pure and dignified, bound to the memory of a felon!"

"Thinking of it, and of her," Bernard observed, "I should almost have thought such a fate would have killed her. Greater pride I never saw in any one than in that gentle widow lady."

"Ay, and that pride has made her fly from my love, lest in blessing her it might injure me!" cried Philip, his eyes flashing. "Kill her! No, hers is too great and strong a soul to droop and die under the disgrace of a worthless husband. She would put it from her, and bury it out of her own remembrance, and everybody else's ken. Bernard, I never cared to find her before as much as I do to-day; for I never felt before that she loved me as much as I do now."

Bernard had risen, and was pacing the room as if deep in thought. He stopped short at this, and spoke abruptly:

"Do you feel—you have lived in the house with her, you ought to know—do you feel as if she were a truthful woman—a woman who would not tell a lie on slight occasion?"

"I am sure of it. See, even in this. She has been silent altogether as to many things she might have told us. Of some others she has said when questioned, 'Do not ask me, I cannot bear to talk of that;' but she has never told us an untruth yet."

"You asked her if she loved you," said Bernard; "did she say, 'Yes?'"

There was no answer.

"Did she even keep silence? or did she say, 'No,' most distinctly, and repeat that 'No' both by word of mouth and letter? Philip, I agree with you that Mrs. Grey is a truthful woman. I do *not* believe that she would lie on a point like that!"

"There is no need for such a strong word as 'lie,'" Philip said, his face flushing angrily. "It is perfectly well known that nine women out of ten think themselves privileged to use some little prevarication on the subject of love."

"I agree with you; but none the less I hold that in this case Mrs. Grey was the tenth. After all, you see, I have a higher opinion of her than you, Philip—in this matter, at least."

The last words came as an after-thought, spoken very low, and with so strange a look—a look half of pain, half of annoyance—that Philip, gazing at him, asked involuntarily:

"What are you thinking of?"

"I would rather not tell you," was the unsatisfactory answer. "Wait a moment;" and he came back to the table. "Let us put in a few words what you have told me. You believe from all you have gathered, that Mrs. Grey—that being, probably, a feigned name—loves you as you love her; but that she has denied her love and fled from you because she knows that your family, who have been kind to her when she was in sore need of kindness, would never consent to your marrying the widow of a man whose life had been publicly disgraced?"

"Yes, I do," said Philip, decisively. "And I believe" (rather reluctantly) "that she cared so much for him—hang him!—that she would submit to any present pain herself rather than be the one to expose the misdeeds for which she, as his wife, has suffered."

"And I believe," thought Bernard, turning from his brother's earnest face, "that this man that she has cared for, cares for still so dearly, was not her husband at all. I believe that she never was his wife; and that that was the misdeed for which she has suffered, and suffers still—God help her!"

CHAPTER XV.

QUESTION AND COUNTER-QUESTION.

BERNARD CLIVE did not say the suspicion aloud. It pained him even to think it, liking and respecting Mrs. Grey as he did, and knowing full well how hopeless to remedy such a sorrow, if he were right, must needs be in the life of any honorable woman, more especially of a woman as proud as Lady Vanborough's companion. It were little matter, then, whether she loved or did not love his brother, in so far as the futility of that love was concerned. Bernard himself, a man ultra-particular in all things connected with womanly delicacy or decorum, felt that however kindly he might feel towards Mrs. Grey, he could never wish to see her his brother's wife—never give her as a sister to his own wife under such circumstances. She might have been deceived or deluded; she might be innocent herself as the babe unborn; and yet if the shadow of such a stain rested on her name, it would not be well to link that name with the proud old one of Clive. He thought of her hasty yet determined flight from Woodleigh, and the suspicion strengthened. He thought of the sudden vehemence, so unlike her usually calm manner, with which she had declared that it would not be right for her to take the post of governess or chaperone to any one motherless child; and it grew into a certainty. Yet withal remained his original conviction that she did not love Philip—that her love was indeed where she stated it to be—in the grave of the man she called her husband; and on that hint he spoke. As to the suspi-

cion, which pained and disappointed him to think of, he would not have uttered it in words to save his own life.

"Look here, Philip," he said, sitting down, and laying his hand affectionately on his brother's knee; "you've had your say, and have suggested a new idea as to the cause of Averil Grey's flight from Woodleigh—an idea which I grant you is not impossible, which may be—mind, I only say *may* be—the fact. Still, and granting all this, listen to me for one minute. Is it fair—is it kind or manly, to insist on pursuing a lady who has given up a comfortable home, friends who valued her, and the peace and respect so dear to every womanly woman, simply to escape from a love she could not return, and would not have thought it right to accept if she could? Would she have taken the trouble to leave the rectory and seek out a new home, cutting off every clue that would trace her, as she did, unless she had good reason for it, and unless it were her fervent desire to be left unmolested? Surely, if you care for her, her wishes and her will should count for something even against your own! Philip, I am disappointed in you."

"Care for her! Care for Averil Grey!" cried the curate, unheeding his last words. "Why, man, if you knew what passion was, you would never use so cold a word in speaking of my feelings in regard to her. I love her, I tell you. I love her as never man loved woman before!"

"You tell me so. Yes, and I do not believe you! Now, Philip, please not to fly out. I believe that you think you do; but you are wrong. What you do love, and love as men have often loved before, is yourself, and your own gratification. That is centred at present in the possession of Averil Grey; and to satisfy that, you put her feelings, her wishes, and even her happiness entirely on one side."

"Excuse me," Philip said, haughtily, an offended flush upon his fair proud face, "I am vain enough to hope that her happiness would be increased, not diminished, as my wife."

"You hope so, and she thinks the contrary. It may be unflattering; but which is the older and more experi-

enced of the two? Philip, if you do love this woman, be unselfish. Believe me, she is old enough and wise enough to know what is best for her happiness, and herself. Granted even that her husband was unworthy of her, have not women loved unworthy men before now? Ay, and loved them more warmly and faithfully than if they had been angels of light!"

"She told me that she loved him," said Philip Clive, sulkily, "and I believe her; but—"

"And she also told you that she did not love you," put in Bernard. "Why don't you believe her there?"

"Because she had not had time," Philip said, excitedly. "If I could only find her, I would soon teach her to—make her love me."

"*Make her!* Philip, if I were not so sorry for you, you would make me laugh. Do you think women can be driven to love like cattle to water, and forced to drink of it? Do you think a woman like Averil Grey is to be coerced into affection which her own heart does not prompt? You can make her despise you if you like; and you will do it. You can make her hate you if you like; and you will do that also; but love—"

"I won't listen to you," Philip broke in, passionately. "I wonder I have stood so much and so patiently already. Love! What do you know about it? That it is a word of four letters, and indirectly connected with breaches of promise and divorce cases, I suppose! I forgot that it was not in you to know what love or passion meant. Bah! I don't blame you. There are men who can't go beyond a certain mild, well-regulated, warm-watery affection; and it's not your fault if you're one of them. I ought never to have spoken of Averil to you; but I thought you might at least feel sufficiently with me to help me. It seems that you don't."

"I am afraid not," said Bernard.

He did not speak angrily; but Philip sprang up in indignation.

"Then you refuse!"

"To help you to follow a lady who has set me the example of refusal? Yes. I am sorry to be obliged to do so; but—"

"I believe that you are in love with her yourself," exclaimed Philip, white with anger, and tossing about the papers on the table with a quivering hand, on which the veins stood out like blue cords.

"You forget that it is not in me to know what love is," retorted his brother, as coolly as before; but then he got up and laid his hand persuasively on Philip's arm.

"Don't let us quarrel, and about a woman," he said. "If I am not a sentimental fellow, and don't understand what passion and that sort of thing means, make allowances for me as I do for you. You think one thing, and try to persuade me into it; I think another and try to persuade you into that. You won't give in to me, because your feelings are too strong for you; I won't give in to you, because my opinions are too strong for me. I don't quarrel with you; don't quarrel with me. Sit down and shake hands."

"Thank you," said Philip, smiling bitterly, his hands trembling still as he hastily thrust them into his gloves. "If my feelings were as cursedly cold-blooded as your opinions, I might sit down. As it is— But quarrel! Oh! dear no. Why should we? I asked a brotherly kindness of you, and you refuse it. I don't mean to quarrel with you; but if you expect me to feel the same—"

"I don't," Bernard answered, still speaking with perfect good-humor, but in the easy bantering way which (unconsciously) was adding fuel to the flame of Philip's wrath. "I expect you to feel very sore and awfully aggrieved, and to make yourself as disagreeable as the best of men are liable to do under the circumstances, for a time. What! Are you going?"

"To leave you to enjoy your joke in peace!" Philip said, fiercely. "Yes, I am! How does this confounded door open? Oh!" And so he went out of it without a word of farewell, and letting it clang to with a noisy bang as he passed downstairs.

Bernard stood still for a moment where he had been left, and then dropped in his chair, his face grave and sad enough now to do away with all suspicion of joking.

"Mild, warm-watery affection," he repeated, slowly.

"And from one of them! Well, well, the lad was in a passion, and— But I did think *he* would have understood me better."

The sunshine fell upon his bent head with a kindly touch, and rested on the papers tossed here and there by Philip's hasty hand. With an old-bachelor-like hatred of untidiness, he got up, and began rearranging them in their former neat piles; then turned to get his hat, with the muttered remark, "I suppose I ought to let Mrs. Grey know that he is in town," fastened the door behind him, and was just sallying forth, when he encountered at the bottom of the steps a very pretty girl in a very bright pink bonnet, and with the stamp "provincial" written in each frill of her lilac gown, and each stitch of her brand-new primrose-colored gloves.

"Can you tell me which are Mr. Clive's rooms?" she said, looking up to him with a smile naturally sweet and artificially shy, and which brought prominently into view a double row of teeth white and even enough to turn the head of—a dentist!

"No. 14, first floor up. May I ask what you want with him?" inquired Clive, the while his eye, skilled in varieties of womankind, was mentally pronouncing its verdict on his visitor's appearance.

"Country—*bourgeoise*—respectable. Thinks herself a beauty," thought the lawyer. "Never saw her before. *Ergo*—law business. Query—breach of promise?"

Not much to his surprise—after the last idea suggested—the young woman faltered, blushed, and even showed a slight inclination to tear the tassel off her pink-lined parasol.

"I—I—" she stammered. "Do you know if I can go up—if he's at home? or—"

"I'm Mr. Clive," said Bernard, sharply. "If you wish to see me on business now, I am at your service for"—looking at his watch—"ten minutes. After that I have an appointment."

The blushing and faltering recommenced, and the young woman's bonnet-strings were nervously tightened.

"Oh! thank you. It wasn't that, but—mother knows—"

"She has the advantage of me, then," said Clive, patiently, and in no wise impressed by the combination of sidelong eyes, white teeth, and rosy cheeks. For himself, he would far have preferred to have to do with the mother. "Pray go on. You wanted—?"

"Oh! I beg your pardon. It—it wasn't *you*; but—haven't you a friend staying with you?"

"No, I have not," said Clive, shortly. He was surprised now, but did not care to waste time in showing it. "Good morning."

"Not Mr. Bellew?" She had stopped him, startled by his abruptness out of her little airs and graces, and laying her hand on his coat-sleeve with a grasp unconsciously strong enough to surprise him. "He mentioned in a letter that he was coming to stay with his friend Clive at the Temple, because there was sickness in his own house. If you are Mr. Clive, you'll know about him, or perhaps there are two of the name!"

"There is no other of my name," said Clive, gravely; "and though I know Mr. Bellew, he is certainly not staying with me, or in London at all."

His surprise had passed away now in a faint shrug of the shoulders at the name of his friend—a faint sense of disgust at the thought, "So this is the sort of thing Master Dick's visit would have entailed! Lucky for me he went elsewhere;" and he would have gone on with a nod; but the girl was not to be so easily left.

"Do you know where he is, then?" she asked; and Clive answered, "Somewhere in the country, I believe."

He had not the slightest intention of giving his friend's address.

The visitor's eyes sparkled. Her timidity was quite forgotten now.

"The country! Can he have gone down to us? Good gracious! How unfortunate if we've come all this way up here, and he be at home after all!"

"If you could tell me where 'home' is?" suggested Clive.

"Market Gosling, Loamshire," the young woman put in quickly, and with a hopefulness in her face which Clive's shake of the head dispelled.

"No," he said, slowly; "I only saw him for a few minutes before he left, but I am pretty sure he never mentioned Market Gosling; nor did I think of asking him if he were going there. Your own name is—?"

"Fanny Greypole," responded the visitor, promptly. "Miss Greypole, that is. I dare say he has spoken to you—"

"Often," said Clive, keeping, I am afraid, more to the letter than the spirit of the truth. "Well, Miss Greypole, I am sorry not to be able to give you any information about Mr. Bellew. I hope you have not come up to London on purpose to see him."

"Indeed we did," said the girl, her black eyes very doleful. "Mother would have come before, only I persuaded her not, for he said it would be just ruin for it to be known at home; though, if he means to act like a gentleman, it must be known sooner or later; and as he's not coming back to Oxford for a year, mother said she wouldn't wait any longer, for there was nothing to keep him from going off on the Continent or somewhere without letting us know, or settling anything at all."

"Settling?" repeated Clive, inquiringly, and then checked himself. "I beg your pardon, but I ought to tell you that I know very little of Mr. Bellew's private affairs. If he has any business to settle with you, I have no doubt that by writing to his usual address you will receive an answer."

Miss Greypole nodded her head, angrily.

"If I don't, mother says she will go to law, and mother's not a woman to be played with. She says her daughters shan't be left to go a-begging through any one's nonsense; and, you know, a man really ought to stand to what he says."

"Undoubtedly," said Clive. He looked at her more narrowly as he spoke. Despite the over-fine clothes and dubious presentation, instinct told him that his first idea was the correct one, and that the young woman was as "respectable" as she was plebeian; and told him likewise that, under the vanities and affectations incidental to her age and position, there lurked a certain amount of shrewd-

ness and determination which made her somewhat interesting to a student of human nature. If Dick, among his numerous little games, had chosen to play with this young woman, she was not one, Clive thought, to let him go scot-free and rejoicing, as other girls had done, and hid their broken hearts in shame and silence. A sort of presentiment of evil to Mr. Bellew, and through him to Kate and the rest of the family, came over Clive as he stood looking down on the gorgeous bonnet and primrose gloves, and made him, despite his impatience to get to Lady Vanborough's, delay to ask:

"If I can get his address, would you like me to write and tell him of your call?"

"I'd rather you sent me the address, and write to him myself. I think he'd mind me better," was the frank answer.

Clive smiled.

"Very likely; but I am afraid I can't do that," he said. "To give a person's address to a stranger without authority to do so would be taking a liberty which, if taken with me, I should certainly resent."

Miss Greypole pouted.

"It seems to me," she said, looking up with an odd mixture of bashful sauciness and the shrewdness Clive had detected, "that mother is right when she says men always *resent* straightforward dealings where a woman is concerned."

"In individual cases I've no doubt your mother is perfectly right," Clive answered, composedly.

"And Dick's afraid of mother. She knows it, too," Miss Greypole went on.

"I have no doubt of that either," said Clive. "Your mother is evidently a remarkable woman. Now, as my time is precious"—he made another movement to go, and at the same time Fanny Greypole came nearer.

"Tell him then," she said, low and hurriedly, "that we are at No. 11 Praed Street; over a china shop it is; and tell him mother's set on speaking to a lawyer, without he writes or comes up to settle something nice and fairly. I'm not sure she won't see one if he delays the least. Tell him so, please."

"Most certainly I will," said Clive. "Now, good morning, Miss Greypole, and allow me, as a lawyer myself, to suggest one thing to you as a sensible woman. Don't take any rash steps in anger. Law is a ticklish thing, very easy to set in motion, very difficult to stop again, and given at times to rebounding on those who play with it."

He lifted his hat as he spoke and went away swiftly. Looking back after he had gone some distance, he saw the pink bonnet and primrose gloves in close juxtaposition with an older and more soberly attired woman.

"How has he got into that girl's hands?" Clive thought. "And what can she be?—lodging-house keeper's daughter, or lady's-maid? Too blunt for the latter, I fancy. Surely he can't have been mad or fool enough to marry her privately; or is it my first thought after all—a breach of promise case? It seems incredible, even for him, with a widowed mother and all those young sisters; but it doesn't look like anything worse. Her manner is too honest and confident of being in the right. Upon my word, that young scamp deserves to be horse-whipped. Fancy Kate's family name dragged through the law-courts! and yet the alternative of such a sister would be almost as bad. Well, I can but write and warn him. It seems to me that everybody's affairs are crowded on to my head."

He had jumped into a hansom, and was at Lady Vanborough's door by now; so dismissing the man, he inquired if she were at home; and being answered in the affirmative, was shown upstairs to the drawing-room, where Lady Vanborough was at that moment engaged in a desperate struggle between the piano, two professional violins, and an amateur flute. The babel of moans, wails, squeaks, and crashes proceeding from the tortured chamber might be better imagined than described; and in the middle of the infernal din, calm and serene as usual, sat Mrs. Grey, the white border of her widow's-cap and line of golden hair bent over some work, on which her mind appeared to be concentrated to the exclusion of all else.

"Francesca in the Inferno," thought Clive to himself,

as he entered the room; and then he sighed, for with the suggestion came an association of ideas which made it appear even more applicable; and he was thankful to have to go up to Lady Vanborough before meeting the face of a woman whom, however erring, he was there to befriend.

"Don't speak to me," said Lady Vanborough, spasmodically. Her head was almost level with the keys, and her arms going spread-eaglewise, like a galvanic windmill. "Don't come near me for your life.—One, two, three. One, two, three,—three. For Heaven's sake, Mr. Whistleboy, keep *some* time! We are bars behind, and it's all your fault.—Can't we begin again, signor?—this passage, I mean. Now, Mr. Whistleboy, one minute first. Hum it before we commence. Please hum it."

"La—l'-la, lee," began the flute-player, a lanky fair-haired youth with expansively knobby brows, which extended almost to the back of his head, and which became violently pink from nerves and bashfulness the moment he opened his lips. Lady Vanborough interrupted him with a shriek.

"*Quite* wrong! There, I told you so. That's where we were out. Now, do listen—La, l', l', lee, l, lee, l' lee—"

"Mais, madame, pas si vite, pas si vite!" remonstrated the first violin, a greasy little man, with spectacles and a blue chin, and with a close-cropped head like a blacking-brush. "C'est plutôt—La—l' l' lee-e, la, lee, la, lee. Voyons un peu. Un, deux, trois."

"Hallé plays it a great deal quicker," said Lady Vanborough, obstinately. "However, if we crawl, perhaps Mr. Whistleboy will manage to keep up. Call it a dirge, signor—call it a dirge, that's all, and go on. One, two, three."

"How are you, and how do you feel?" said Clive, stepping up to Mrs. Grey, and speaking low, so as not to distract the performers. "You look as if—"

"She were enacting the Christian martyr!" broke in Lady Vanborough, who possessed the most marvelous capacity for making unlimited noise herself, and yet hear-

ing the lowest whisper from those about her, and was averse at all times to hiding her talents under a bushel. Now and then this particular one had been the means of putting certain of her friends to considerable confusion; but on the present occasion it had no such effect, Mrs. Grey merely looking up with her calm, grave smile, as though a playful child had said something saucy; while Clive (who *was* slightly disconcerted) preserved a greater appearance of *sang froid* than usual, and answered coolly:

"Exactly; for the Christian martyrs loved their martyrdom better than all earthly delights. Thanks for the suggestion. It hadn't occurred to me before."

"Hold your tongue, and go away, right away, out of the room," retorted Lady Bee. "You want to make me laugh, and disgrace myself by playing as many false notes as Mr. Whistleboy is doing.—Averil, take him away into my snuggery. He'd a great deal rather talk to you than to me; and when I've got through this I'll come to you. Now, Signor Bolis, once again, and give us a lead over the first fence. One, two, three!"

"Do you often have these sort of things?" said Clive, as Mrs. Grey led the way into the pretty little boudoir before described. "I wonder you can stand it; but I suppose music is one of her weaknesses."

"At present; but fortunately they don't last. Music is the rage this week. The last was the stage, and the next may be the horses. Sensation in any form is the real weakness; but fortunately her mind is strong enough to keep her from rushing into anything worse than eccentricity."

She said it so kindly and so easily that Clive, looking into her eyes, thought within himself:

"Surely this woman could never have brought any slur on herself by weakness, at any rate."

Aloud he answered:

"You take it coolly. It would drive me mad."

"You are a man and can carve out your own niche in life. I am grateful for a home; and so long as Lady Bee is content with making me practice with her in private,

and exempts me from all public share in her vagaries, I should be the last person to complain of them."

"You are right," said Clive, gravely. "There are many worse things in life than a musical mania in a friend; and though that is bad enough, I should be glad if you need never know anything beyond."

There was a decided shade of what the French call *intention* in his tone; and Mrs. Grey recognized it at once. A faint shade of alarm came over her face; but she looked full at him, and asked directly:

"I fancied that you had come to see me this afternoon, Bernard. Have you any bad news for me?"

"Not much," he answered, glad that she had led the way, and yet feeling an embarrassment in touching on her affairs which he had never felt before; "a little worry perhaps; but I thought I had better mention it to you so as to put you on your guard. I have had a visitor to-day."

Her color faded a little; but she only looked at him. Oddly enough, it came back with a half-look of relief when he added:

"My brother."

CHAPTER XVI.

COMBE REGIS.

“GOOD news, young people!” said Kate, looking up from her letter with a bright dimpling smile; “Eve is better—quite out of danger, mamma says. Dottie, you may give three cheers if you like; but don’t throw your tea-cup over the back of your chair, my child, for we’ve got to pay for all we break; and enthusiasm becomes expensive under such circumstances.”

They were all seated at breakfast in the little parlor of Bloom Cottage, Combe Regis, far from London sights and London sounds, from fog and smoke and bustle, away in the green, wave-washed country, and fattening upon fresh air and sea-breezes as only young Londoners can fatten in such circumstances: even Dick sporting a *souffron* of tan in his pale cheek, and Madge having sown quite a crop of freckles on her nose and forehead.

The parlor in which they sat was long and low, the ceiling painted white, and crossed by heavy brown rafters, against which Dick always looked as if he were going to knock his head; and the walls one-half wainscot, terminating in a shelf broad enough to hold “no end of things,” as Madge said, and the other half papered with a vivid pea-green representation in small squares of the sacrifice of Abel. One breadth of this, having got put in upside down, gave you at times an odd impression of being at sea in a gale; and this nautical element was carried out by the pictures on the wall, being chiefly highly-colored prints from the *Illustrated News* of vessels in full

sail over a cobalt sea, or stranded upon a burnt sienna beach. Cases of stuffed gulls, squirrels, etc., so unlike life that it was difficult to imagine that they had ever figured in the flesh, also ornamented the pea-green walls; and opposite to them was a window, long and low, like the room, lattice-paned, and looking out on a patch of garden, a flicker of almond-blossoms, and a broad expanse of tumbling, tossing sea. The fireplace was very original, having a broad, black, wooden mantel-shelf, adorned with a concave mirror in an antique carved frame, stacks of peacock's feathers, and hecatombs of shells, and an oven big enough to bake a good-sized loaf, which was the special joy and delight of Madge Bellew for cooking limpets and other marine abominations. Madge only sighed for George. Dottie was only a baby, and Kate was grown up, and didn't enjoy limpet-pies and dough-nuts with the zest of George and Tom. The little girl never looked at the oven without an impatient exclamation at Mr. M'Kenzie for having carried off her playfellow. In one corner by the fireplace was a funny little window about two feet square, across which a Portugal laurel had grown, and blocked out all but a glimpse of green light; and in the other stood a funnier little chiffonier of some black wood inlaid with brass, and always loaded with jugs and bowls of wild flowers, books, and workboxes. Of flowers, indeed, there was no lack in the room; a large soup-plate full of primroses, looking like a heap of pale sunshine, set round with dark crinkly leaves, standing in the middle of the round breakfast-table, on which hot scones, fried bacon, Melton pie, toast, and marmalade made a goodly display, and contrasted amusingly with the infinitesimally small plates, black-handled knives, and Britannia metal forks.

"You must really write to my mother for some silver today," Dick was saying; "everything one eats tastes of these confounded knives.—Oh, bother! one can't be always remembering the children. Men are not expected to talk like school-girls."

"What would you do if you heard Dottie say it?" said Kate, in French, that Dottie might not understand.

"Do! whip her, of course," replied Dick, in English; and Dottie, who had caught her own name with infantine quickness, lifted up her innocent daisy-like face and round blue eyes to Kate, and asked, anxiously:

"Nobody's doin' to whip me, is dey, Katie? Me's not done nuttin naughty, has me?"

"No, my darling; you're the goodest of the good," said Kate, kissing her; and Dottie, looking across at Dick with a sort of doubtful confidence, repeated:

"Me twite dood, Dick; doodest of dood—Katie says so."

Dick's favorite dog, a beautiful brown and white setter, was lying on the wide chintz-covered settee which nearly filled up one side of the wall, keeping guard over his master's hat and fishing-rod, which had been thrown down among the cushions; and opposite to the fireplace stood a shabby little cottage piano, which had been hired, with some difficulty, from the nearest town, and was at present encumbered by a great heap of tangled ivy, ferns, and convolvuli, gathered during an early ramble in the woods. The window was open to let in the sunshine and fresh morning air, and the chintz curtains fluttering in the breeze and bulging inwards, half hid, half revealed, the panorama of blue, foam-frayed sea and greenish-gray headlands. There was a strange smell of salt about everything, salt and seaweeds, wild flowers, and tar, which pervaded the whole atmosphere; and down upon the beach below, four or five stalwart fellows, in blue guernsey shirts and red caps, were singing, "Yo, heave ho," in rough melody as they hauled a great brown boat, flecked with foam and dripping with wet seaweed, up from the sun-flooded waters of the bay to the sun-flooded yellows sands above them.

Little Dottie, with her golden hair and rosy face, sat eating her bread-and-milk with solemn and somewhat sloppy energy, which diffused itself over her cheeks and pinafore in the process; but the elders had finished, and Dick, tossing the *Times* on the piano, gave the signal for a move by going to the window and shouting to some one on the beach to know if the "boat was ready."

"Ay, ay, zur. Gwine to bring her down now," was shouted in answer; and Dick caught up his hat and whistled to Floss, the setter. Kate gave him his rod, and knotted the string of his hat securely to his button-hole. "It won't do to lose two in a week," she said, laughing; and Dick laughed too, and pulled her ear.

"That's a good girl! I say, Kittie, won't you come along too? I'm going to try Waters's new boat, and sail round Deadman's Head, and see if there's any fishing to be got in the cove. Run and put on your hat. It's a glorious day, and she's the prettiest craft going. If she only sails as well as she looks, I've a good mind to hire her for all the time we are here."

"Oh, Dick!" broke in impetuous Madge, knocking over her chair in her haste to get to him. "Let me go too. Will you? I've got a rod now, you know, and—"

"No, no, Madge. Now don't you bother. There isn't room, and I hate going fishing with more than one girl—they do chatter so consumedly."

"But, Dick, I won't open my mouth once, I promise."

"Take Madge instead of me," said Kate, good-humoredly. "I ought to write to mamma, and she wants to go.—Get your hat, Madge, and do, for goodness' sake, take an umbrella, child. You're getting as brown as a beefsteak."

"I like being brown; it's healthy. Oh, Katie! what a delicious old trump you are!" cried Madge, tearing upstairs in frantic haste, while Kate turned to her brother and asked, "You're sure that boat is safe, Dick? Have you been out in it before?"

"No; but Waters has five or six times. Safe! of course it's safe. Is that why you backed out, Miss Kittie Coward?"

"Nonsense! But I am a coward for Madge, I acknowledge. Don't let her spring about in the boat, Dick."

"All right. Don't bother;" and Kate ran after Madge to warn her that if she were not quiescent in the boat Dick might not take her out again, a politic suggestion which she knew would have more effect than any entreaties on the score of the girl's own safety.

Left alone with Dottie, Miss Bellew sat down to write to her mother, while *la cadette* washed her doll in a soap-dish and administered dirt pills to it with maternal solicitude. It is curious to watch how early the philoprogenitive instinct commences to act in some girls, while others have grown to be wives, and even mothers, without even possessing it at all. In the middle of the operation, however, the maid came in to take Miss Dottie for a walk, and the little lady, flinging her doll upon the floor, rushed to Kate's side with:

"Katie, tate me. Do pease, Katie tarling. Me lites to do out wis oo so mush."

"Do you, little one?" said Kate, good-naturedly. "All right, so you shall.—Get her ready, Martin." And Dottie departed, frisking with triumph, while Kate fastened her letter and ran upstairs for her own hat.

A very pretty pair the two sisters made as they appeared at the cottage door; the one lithe and blooming, in the full flush of her girlish beauty, not a frill or a flounce spoiling the "upper ten" simplicity of her brown linen dress, not a speck of color to compete with her own rich tints of hair and skin, save the blue silk handkerchief knotted loosely round her full white throat; the other, a tiny wax doll, all white frills from the cambric sunbonnet crowning her golden hair, to the inch of skirt above her pink, plump legs, which trotted at the rate of three steps to one at Kate's side. Dottie, in her little white frock and pinafore, was nothing nearly so fine as the grocer's little girl over the way, a small damsel of five in a green merino dress with a silk "panier" and a sash and shoulder-ribbons of vivid rose-color, who stood looking curiously out at her from her father's doorway; but the very absence of adornment, conjoined with her delicate little features and milk-white skin, gave her an air of distinction which made every one they passed turn for a second look at the baby stranger. "You might ha' rigged her up, hood an' gownd an' a', wi' a yard or two o' white calicer," the old milk-woman coming down the street told her friend, "an' yet the wee lassie looks for a' the world like a queen's bairn."

That side of the cottage where the parlor was looked, as I have said, on to the sea across a small square garden, bright with beds of snow-drops and crocuses, set round with curious shell borders, a honeysuckle arbor in one corner near the low stone wall which overhung the beach, and close under the lee of the house, a great almond-tree which overtopped the roof, and looked at present like a huge bouquet of delicate pink blossom. You had only to glance at that waving tuft of color, to know whence came the name by which the cottage was known in Combe Regis.

The front of the house, however, where the family lived, looked into the village street, which, paved with rough, pointed pebbles, and bordered by quaint red-roofed houses, climbed abruptly up a steep hill to the old church at the top, its low square tower standing out, grim and gray, against the blue April sky. The houses were all built of stone, once gray too; but now stained by time and salt sea winds to every imaginable tint and shade of color, from russet-brown to green and orange; and with their over-hanging eaves, small lattice-paned windows, and half-hatch doors, at which the women squatted, mending nets, while their children played about them, would have made any number of subjects for Hook or Grahame. They would have found a still better theme in the scrap of triangular beach at the bottom of the street, where quite a group of fishing-boats, with their brown sails half set, and their wet cordage glistening in the sunbeams, were clustered in the little cove, while big red-capped fishermen busied themselves in piling tangled wreaths of brown network on board, or in carrying up baskets of slippery, silvery fishes, to load upon a small cart drawn by an old white donkey, that stood plunging his nose into a basket of turnip-tops upon the causeway.

Kate and Dottie did not go near the cove, however, but turned their backs on it, and climbed up the village street, till they turned off from it just below the church into a path which led across a sweep of heather all rich brown, flecked with the golden blossoms of the gorse, and overrun by little white-tailed rabbits, that scudded about among the heather, and made Dottie shriek with delight.

"Oh! may me catch a wabbit—may me?" she pleaded, pulling excitedly at her sister's hand; and Kate giving royal permission, Dottie scampered off first after one and then another of the swift-footed little rodents, until she caught her own foot upon a stone, and rolling over and over like a ball, had to be picked up and comforted.

"Never mind the rabbits, dear; we are going down to the wood for primroses, you know; *they* won't run away," said Kate; and Dottie, who had a decided weakness for "pwimwoses," consenting with much affability, the two started off hand in hand down the heathery hillside to a small wood or copse, where wild flowers of all sorts abounded; and which formed the outposts of Datherly Estate, the property of one of the chief magnates of the shire.

Here Kate sat down to rest upon a hummock of dry dead bracken, and sending Dottie to go and pick primroses, took a couple of letters out of her pocket, and unfolded them for a fresh perusal. The first was the one she had received that morning from her mother; and she read over again all the discursive little home details and invalid accounts, with a sigh of relief for the improvement mentioned in the latter. The other was from George, written some days previously—a mere school-boy's scrawl, mentioning a horse-show to which he had been with Mr. M'Kenzie, and a new play to which the same gentleman had taken him. Beneath were a couple of lines, very frankly and cordially expressive of his pleasure in Master George's company, from the host himself; and Kate turned to these and read them over again with the same smile her mother's letter had evoked, and something like a blush into the bargain.

"What a nice hand he writes!" she thought, "so firm, and yet so neat and clear. I wish Dick or I could write like it; and how kind he is, taking George about everywhere, and pretending that it is all a pleasure to himself! It is very odd, the way in which we have grown to know him better in three weeks than hosts of men whom we have known for three years and more."

And Kate closed the letter, and leaning her head against the trunk of a tree, gave herself up to dreamy musings on the peculiarities of life as exemplified in the recent acquaintanceship.

Kate had begun to think a good deal about Dallas M'Kenzie of late, more than she was in the habit of thinking of any man in particular, and her thoughts were not unpleasant ones. She had admired him, admired him quite unaccountably, the first moment her eyes fell on him at Mrs. de Ponsonby's ball. She had met him and talked to him when she and her mother called on that lady two days later, and again in the park on the following day, with Petre de Ponsonby, when both gentlemen found their way to the side of the carriage, and Mr. M'Kenzie received a general invitation to call from Lady Margaret.

I am afraid Lady Margaret was hardly a prudent woman to be the guardian of so many daughters; but there was something quiet yet fascinating—unmistakable good looks, yet joined with an unmistakably middle-aged air—which made the mother feel safe and at home after a few minutes' chat with this traveler. Besides, as every one knows, M'Kenzie is a very respectable name in the north of Scotland. He himself spoke of having been in the Royal Engineers when he first went abroad; and every word and tone bespoke a man of education and refinement. Kate did not think her mother imprudent at all, and felt quite a little glow of indignation when Lady Bee remarked on the suddenness of this friendship with a gentleman who had dropped so lately out of nowhere. For it *was* a friendship, and no one could deny it. Mr. M'Kenzie was continually coming to the house—once and sometimes twice a week; and then there were chance meetings in the park, and he had dined with them, and got them tickets for concerts, and private picture views. Kate thought it was very pleasant, and said so openly, asserting as openly that Dallas M'Kenzie was one of the best-looking and pleasantest men she had ever met—"so different from the young men about town."

"And why should I not say what I think?" she had

said, when remonstrated with by a young lady friend on her over-frankness. "There is no harm in speaking the truth as to whether one likes a person or not."

"You will be falling in love with him next," the friend said, and then Katie flamed up.

"I wish you would not be always talking of falling in love. Surely a woman can like a few people without—and it is so ridiculous, as if people were not to be frank in their friendships, and proud to own and be thankful for them. Surely even if I were to—fall in love," cried Kate, growing furiously scarlet at the bare sound of her own words, "would there be anything sinful or disgraceful in it, that I should affect to deny the very merits of the person beforehand and—but all this is such utter nonsense; and indeed, please forgive me, but I think it is worse taste to suggest such things as falling in love with any one one knows so very slightly as Mr. M'Kenzie, than to praise him because he is pleasant and gentlemanly, and not exactly the same as other people."

After this the conversation dropped, and the friend quarreled with Kate, which was not wholly unnatural, as for one young lady to tell another that what she says is not "good taste," is impolite, to say the least, and less easy to forgive than many an accusation involving much deeper wickedness. But this result remained, the usual one in such cases—Katie was a little shy with Mr. M'Kenzie the next time she saw him, and afterwards thought more of him than she had done before, and in a different manner. Previously her liking had been purely centred in certain qualities of the man, not the man himself, and it had never crossed her mind to inquire whether he were single, married, or engaged. Now a personal element had entered into her admiration; and not content with liking him, she began to care for his liking her, and to be sorry for his faults, as well as appreciative of his merits. Also, she took more interest in the things he said to her of himself than all he could say on other subjects.

This was a symptom, and a dangerous one.

"He was not exactly the same as other people"—I

am afraid those last words of Kate's to her quondam friend gave a clue to the principal charm in Dallas M'Kenzie. He had been long enough out of England to have lost (if he had ever acquired) that vapid, dreary, *blasé* tone which our young men consider it "the thing" to assume in these latter days. Instead of thinking it "bad form" to express a lively interest in anything beyond a ballet-girl's ankles, and the "correct thing" to have no individual taste in this life above a cigar, or (occasionally) the points of a horse, Dallas M'Kenzie was more enthusiastic than Kate herself, had tastes as strong as her own, and an individuality even more decided. Dick called him "gushing," because he went into a hot fire of eulogy over Doré's "Prætorium," and sneered at his "wild Indian demonstrations" when he spoke with flashing eyes and withering scorn of the "Swinburne school" of literature; but though Kate shrank under the sneer without resenting or loving Dick the less for it, her own heart sent up a warm protest for a more favorable judgment; and her own good sense told her that to have the power of loving warmly what was noble, and hating bitterly what was vile, was a thing not to be despised, but rather admired and envied.

"Do not laugh at me: I know I am old-fashioned and backwoodsman enough to feel things more strongly than London men," Mr. M'Kenzie had said to her once; but Kate felt no temptation to laugh at him, and her eyes said so with most unaffected candor. He apologized also to her on another occasion for his temper, having lost it altogether in a gust of perfectly uncontrolled wrath at the opera, when some man, who had evidently partaken too freely at dinner, had showed a tendency to make impertinent remarks on the ladies passing along the lobby.

"It has been the curse of my life," he said to Kate, later. "I was a spoiled child, and allowed to fly into passions for any or every cause—sometimes none at all; and see the result! A hasty temper and a hasty judgment have ruined my whole happiness, and that of those about me, and made my life desolate before I was thirty."

"But, Mr. M'Kenzie," said Kate, the sad, remorseful

tone waking a world of pity in her brown eyes, "you are very seldom angry; and sometimes it is right to be vexed with people. You thought those men were speaking of *us*."

"Ah!" he said, smiling, "you are young and tender-hearted, and would find excuses where none are. I seem very seldom angry, because too late—years too late—I have learned to strive for self-command and cooler judgment. If you knew me as I am, or rather as I was—"

And then he broke off, while Kate looked in wonder and sympathy at the careworn look which spread over his face, the great lines, never wholly absent, which came out deeper than ever on his brow. Certainly, Mr. M'Kenzie was "not like the young men about town." They never talked to her about their temper, or told her of faults which had ruined their lives.

"And I am sure he is a thousand times better than they are," cried Kate, who did not agree with that prince of cynics, M. Rochefoucauld, when he said, "*Nous n'avouons de petits défauts que pour persuader que nous n'avons pas de grands.*"

It might be that Mr. M'Kenzie was in the habit of making confidences about himself; but neither did this idea occur to Kate, who took it as a great compliment to herself to be thus trusted with the inner feelings of a man's life; and began to feel as if, in some sort, Mr. M'Kenzie were belonging to her in virtue of such trust; and to feel that warm interest and sympathy for him which it was her nature to feel for all things connected with her home circle.

"I am afraid you have gone through a great deal of trouble," she said to him once, a little fount of pity shining in her honest brown eyes; "but it is all over now, isn't it?"

"Over!" he repeated, a sort of harsh bitterness in his tone, which would have repelled her if she had not seen it was not directed at herself. "Is pain and wrong ever over while memory lasts and life remains? Only a child like you—" He checked himself there, and added, with

that quick transition to gentleness which made one of the charms of his variable nature, "But it is like the innocent child you are, sweet and loving enough to care for even a stranger's troubles—troubles you could not understand if you knew them."

Now, it does not often happen in society that young ladies of the period are told in so many words, and without compliment or jest, by their male acquaintances, that they are sweet and loving and innocent. If men *think* it, they are sufficiently prudent to keep such thoughts to themselves. And therefore, though Kate was always inundated with compliments, the worth and meaning of which she knew too well to pay any heed to them, these simple words, spoken with such candid gravity by a man so much older than herself, sounded like the sweetest flattery in her ears, and were dwelt on with a pleasure which derived its source from the unspoken thought, "He must think it, or he would not say it, he is so frank; and if he thinks so well of me, he must like me."

He did. Kate was right. He liked her very much, but not in the way in which she was beginning to like him. He had once loved a woman passionately—had been, as he considered, bitterly wronged—and had shunned and avoided all womankind for years after for her sake. But the man's nature was not misanthropical or morose. His temper might be passionate, and his judgment hasty; but the heart behind was warm, and the inclination to love and trust indestructibly vivid.

It was Kate's frankly-shown liking for him which won him to like her. He admired her fresh young beauty, as was only natural. He felt towards her, in his own words, as towards an innocent loving child; and found rest and pleasure in her girlish friendship. No other thought had ever occurred to him, else perhaps he had made an effort to deny himself the free enjoyment of her society and sympathy, and, for her own sake, left her to forget him and his troubled life among younger and easier-minded men. But Kate knew nothing of this; and it was with a violent and joyous start that she was suddenly roused from her musings by two hands clapped on her shoulders;

and, turning quickly round, found George at her back, and Dallas M'Kenzie standing at a little distance, smiling at her bewildered expression.

"Why, Katie, you nearly jumped out of your skin," cried George, going off into a peal of delighted laughter at the success of his grand surprise.

CHAPTER XVII.

LADY VANBOROUGH STARTS A NEW IDEA.

MRS. GREY's face had certainly changed from white alarm to an expression of relief when Clive gave the answer recorded; and he noticed it. It was with a sort of smile, though a very weary and worried one, that she said:

"You don't mean to say that your brother is still foolish enough to—"

"To go on loving you, and hunting for you everywhere in the hope of inducing you to reconsider your decision. Yes; I am sorry for his folly, but that is just what he is doing."

Mrs. Grey shrugged her shoulders. It was plain that she did not love Philip, else she had felt more sympathy for him.

"I am sorry for it," she said, "but I cannot help it. It is worse than folly, Bernard; it is something like madness. Nobody ever heard of a woman being persecuted in this way—and for simply saying 'No'!"

"Perhaps if you were to see him, and hear what he has to urge—"

"To what end? Did I not hear it all, not once but a dozen times, before I left Woodleigh? I verily believe that had I stayed there, he would have shot himself or me, one morning. He did threaten it. Am I the only woman in the world?"

"You are the only woman for him, it seems."

"Not for him, you mean! At least, that is what I

have striven to impress on him. Why will he not believe me?"

"Because you gave him no reason."

"But I did. I told him I do not love him. Is not that reason enough?"

"No, for he urges that if you would only give him the opportunity, he would win your love."

"He is self-confident," she said, with a smile.

"He is a man in love, and in earnest," Clive answered, gravely.

"A man! Say rather a boy compared to me, and a boy too obstinate to take a plain answer. Bernard, cannot you persuade him of the utter hopelessness of his pursuit? Tell him that every day diminishes the liking and pity I have hitherto felt for him. Tell him—"

"My dear Mrs. Grey, I can tell him nothing from you without acknowledging that I know where you are."

"Well?"

"Well, simply this. Philip is my only brother, and I am weak enough to care about his trust and friendship. Were he to find out that I had been a party to keeping this secret from him, he would never speak to me or touch my hand again. That is all."

Mrs. Grey's eyes filled. She put out her hand and touched Bernard's kindly.

"All!" she repeated. "You must think me a selfish woman indeed, if you could credit me for being willing to purchase my present peace at the expense of a tithe of such an 'all.' Do you think that I do you as little justice? that I do not see what an utterly unselfish life yours has been, and what a good, warm heart you try to hide under all your short answers and cold speeches? I am a very unfortunate woman, Bernard, but I should be more unfortunate still if I thought I was ever the means of inducing even the most transient coolness between two brothers like you and Philip."

"Thank you," Bernard said, quietly. He did not tell her that that was just what she had done. He said, laughingly, "It is a pity that you could not tell him that you loved some one else, and so settle it."

"Would that have the desired effect?" she asked, so quickly as to startle him.

"I think so. In my case it would. I *might* be unfortunate enough to love a woman whose love was given to another, but I could never wish to make her my wife."

"Then I will write at once and tell him that," Mrs. Grey answered, with a quiet decision of tone and manner which showed she was in earnest—"that I love some one else better, a million times better than I could ever have loved him, had there been no such obstacle in the way."

"Add, if you can," said Clive, gently, "that the person so honored by your interest is no shadow of the past, no memory of the unknowing dead, no grave of a dead husband, but the tangible reality of a living and happy rival."

He spoke slowly and gravely, seeking at the risk of probing her wounds to answer a question important to his own mind; and as he did so, the color came into her face in a deep rich glow, making her look indescribably lovely; but he had put up her spirits, and she answered, firmly:

"Neither a shadow of the grave nor a memory of the dead, but a man as strong in life as himself, and happy—Well, I suppose—I hope so." She said the last words with her eyes turned from him, and in a tone of mingled pain and bitterness which Clive fancied he understood.

"So the man is not dead after all, but alive," he thought. "Is she as pure as she looks, I wonder? Could it have been a sham marriage; and had she the courage to leave him as soon as she found it out? or— No, it is not likely that any one would have tired of her. I wish I knew, for the sake of my own opinion of her. She has acted her widowhood so beautifully that I have faith in her ability to act anything—even virtue."

"Are you satisfied now?" said Mrs. Grey, turning to him with even more dignity than usual in her beautiful face—a dignity which almost rebuked the idea of ever so faint a reproach in connection with her. "*You* don't wish me to marry your brother, Bernard?"

"I don't wish you to do anything you would think wrong or unwise," he said, evasively; and then he added

with a smile, "Forgive me for pressing you to this confession. It is like yourself, kind and generous, to make it; but I do not think you will be sorry later, for just now poor Philip is laboring under a very different delusion."

"And that?"

"I am afraid I ought not to tell you," said Clive, laughing; but his eyes never left her face. "He picked it up down at Southampton a few days ago. You remember the lodgings you were at with Miss Clewer and your French maid when you first came to England?"

He paused, not so much for an answer, as at the deadly pallor which overspread her face—a pallor so intense that it reminded him of nothing else in life—that was gray rather than white, and that turned her very finger-nails livid in the cheery sunshine. Had a ghost risen before her, sheeted and clammy from the grave, she might have looked so, Clive thought; and up before his mind rose a picture he had once seen of the mother of mankind, Eve, lithe-limbed, grand, and golden-haired, in the peaceful days of her exile, bending to lay the infant Abel on his leafy couch, and starting back, as from the vision of a past horror, at the sight of a serpent coiled upon the infant's pillow.

"Good God! Mrs. Grey—are you ill?" he asked, startled at the effect his own words had produced. "For Heaven's sake, don't look like—"

What, was left unsaid: for in the same moment the door opened, and Lady Vanborough entered, laughing heartily, and followed by her fluting martyr.

"Allow you to give it up! No, certainly not, Mr. Whistleboy. I never allow anybody to give up what they undertake in connection with me. Hard on you! Of course I am hard on you. Some one must be, if you keep such atrocious time. Do you think I would let you practice with me if I couldn't be hard on you? And you are to come again on Thursday, and on Friday too; and we'll have a try at it before Bolis comes.—Well, Mr. Clive—has Mrs. Grey been amusing you properly? or have you been pining wearily for my presence? Please say the latter. I like people to be polite to me."

"How could I say anything else?" said Clive.

He spoke laughingly, and standing in front of Mrs. Grey, so as to shield her from observation. But Lady Bee's eyes were as sharp as her ears and tongue; and they had already caught sight of the dead-white face bent so nervously over its owner's work.

"Mrs. Grey, my dear," she said, abruptly, "you've got a headache. Mr. Clive has been boring you. He always does bore every one but me; so just leave him to me, and I'll give him a scolding. Go and lie down, and I'll send you up some tea. There's nothing like a cup of strong tea with a teaspoonful of brandy in it for a headache."

Mrs. Grey rose at once, and with almost grateful alacrity; but Clive put out his hand, a look of apology in his eyes.

"Good-bye, Mrs. Grey," he said. "I'm afraid I have bored you; but I won't do so again; and please send me that letter for the clergyman we were speaking of, and I will forward it to him. He will be grateful for the charity."

He had her hand in his, but it felt very cold, and she merely bowed her head in answer before taking it and herself away.

Lady Vanborough rang for tea; and, during the clatter made by its appearance, said to Clive in an abrupt aside:

"You two are not making fools of yourselves, I hope."

"Making—I don't understand you, Lady Vanborough," said Clive, haughtily, and staring.

"Have you quarreled?" she asked, paying no manner of heed to his tone.

"I hope not."

"You would be a fool if you did; though, mind you, I've no patience with her; for I think she's behaving like the mother of all geese."

Clive raised his shoulders somewhat impatiently. It was not a polite gesture; but then Lady Vanborough was not given to politeness herself.

"Are we playing at conundrums?" he asked. "If so,

with a smile, "Forgive me for pressing you to this confession. It is like yourself, kind and generous, to make it; but I do not think you will be sorry later, for just now poor Philip is laboring under a very different delusion."

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memory, the loyalty of his friendship had found strength to hold closer to its shrine through all the pain of its defacement, and to construct a theory of trust abused, of innocence wronged and of a soul which had left its all on earth for conscience' sake, and yet had enshrined that "all" within its heart, and suffered no other tenant to enter there in. Such a theory, painful as it was to contemplate for her sake, yet left Averil Grey high and stainless on the pedestal where he had placed her—a pedestal where indeed it might be right she should stand alone and unsupported through her earthly days, but whence none had right or title to cast her down. But to think of her as a woman light and unstable as others, weak enough to forget the past, and throw away her love anew on a man who had never even sought it—who did not return it—on *him* of all men—that was quite a different order of things; and with all his strength Clive strove to drive it out of his mind, hating Lady Bee the while for having planted it there.

"It is an absurd figment of her own over-heated brain. Better not to pay it the compliment of thinking of it at all," he said to himself.

In his heart he did think of it, and carried his thought into action. He kept away from Lady Vanborough's for the next week.

Philip wrote to him in a few days. He kept up his resentment as long as he could; but finding Harriet even more unsympathizing than Bernard (his sister had taken for her text—"if there were not something wrong about Mrs. Grey, she would never have gone off in that mysterious way, after pretending to care for Minnie too: and making the servants talk, and all!") he was driven to magnanimous forgiveness of the brother who had always been his best friend, and made him the confidant of his passion as heretofore.

"I have found the lady's maid," he wrote, "after a great deal of trouble; for she had moved from her first address, and keeps a very poky little milliner's shop in Lamb's Conduit Street; and I have found out one or two more things, though with even more difficulty, and at the ex-

pense of a good deal more bamfoozling than I like. The woman is as staunch as steel to her mistress, and will not let out one word as to her whereabouts and antecedents. When I tell you, however, that I am to have the very trunk I told you of sent down to me at Woodleigh tomorrow, you may guess I have done something, though it is not with the mistress of the establishment."

"Gone down from lodging-house keepers to servant-girls," said Bernard, with a shrug of his broad shoulders. "And this is love! It is not an elevating element, of a certainty."

Apparently some mysterious intuition—what the fair and fast lady spiritualists of the day elect to call "superior psychic force"—had led Philip to foresee what would be his brother's sentiments; for he broke off here, and added abruptly:

"I had meant to tell you all about it, but I think I will wait; for until you see the result you will be pulling long faces, and caviling at the necessary steps leading to the end. I give you credit for sufficient family affection to wish me joy when that end is won, and Averil my wife."

He said not a word of having received any letter from Mrs. Grey; and looking back at the hopeful, expectant ring of Philip's own, Bernard could not think that Mrs. Grey had been true to her intention.

"And yet if she could look *me* in the face and say it, surely she could say it to him," he thought, with some irritation, and an emphasis on the "me," which might undoubtedly have been traced to that communication from Lady Vanborough, of which he had determined not to think. "Perhaps the hint I gave her, and which alarmed her so much, made her change her mind about writing to him. Perhaps she thought Lady Vanborough's entrance prevented my saying more, and has been expecting me to renew the subject. Poor thing! if that is the case, I really ought to call, and put her out of her suspense; for I really did not intend to say any more, and was rather thankful for the interruption. I must put this nonsense out of my head, and call."

But unfortunately it is sometimes harder to drive non-

sense out of a head than to drive sense into it; and Mr. Clive delayed paying his call till, as I have said, more than a week had passed away; and then, one afternoon when he had nothing better to do, turned up at Lady Vanborough's door, and inquired if that individual was within.

"No; my lady was out of town," the flunkey said.

"Was Mrs. Grey gone with her?"

"Yes; Mrs. Grey was gone too."

He did not say, "with her;" but to hear that she was gone was enough for Clive, who departed with a decided sense of relief. Strong, hard man as he was, he felt as nervous and bashful as a girl at meeting the woman who had flushed under his gaze in such beautiful, womanly embarrassment, as she owned that his brother's rival in her affections was no memory of a dead husband, but a living and happy man. He was glad not to see her again; and yet when he went home he felt irritated with himself for not having called sooner. If he could have seen Lady Vanborough, at least, and forced her to explain and give a reason for what she had said! If he could but have convinced her of the absurdity of her own eccentric fancy! But he had delayed too long; and now Lady Vanborough and Mrs. Grey were both gone, and only the eccentric idea remained behind, to irritate him by its absurdity till their return.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WELCOME AND UNWELCOME VISITORS.

“**D**ID we startle you very much, Miss Bellew?” said Dallas, as he took her hand, while George, having espied Dottie deep in a primrosy nook, crept off on hands and knees, to treat her to a similar awakening. “I don’t know how strong your nerves may be; but your brother was so imperious on the subject, that to keep the peace I was obliged to let him have his own way.”

“I think that Dick and Eve are the only two of us who indulge in such a luxury as nerves,” said Kate, laughing, and certainly showing no displeasure at the rencontre; “you did make me jump, however; I could hardly believe it was George; and what can have brought *you* down here?”

“Brought me? Well, my young guest. You should have kept an eye on your little sister’s correspondence, Miss Bellew, if you did not wish to see me; for George got such a heart-rending epistle from Miss Madge, the day before yesterday, describing fish which might have jumped into his hand if he were only there to catch them, and ‘*heavenly*’ ovens which baked all the delicacies he could possibly have concocted, had he been on the spot to concoct them, that the young scamp became utterly miserable and broken-hearted at the thought of all you were enjoying without him, and moped so piteously, that I had no resource but to bring him down for a day or two, to try whether the reality were as delightful as the description.”

"And you came all this journey to satisfy Georgie's fancies; but, Mr. M'Kenzie, you should not," cried Kate, quite ashamed and contrite; "you are a great deal too good, and it is spoiling him."

Mr. M'Kenzie laughed as if amused.

"Is it? I don't know much about children unfortunately, or how far you may gratify without spoiling them; but it is not too good of me, Miss Bellew, or good at all; for I think I considered my own pleasure quite as much as his."

Kate did not believe this, and said out her thoughts.

"I am afraid you are making him a great trouble to you. Mamma would be vexed if she knew."

"Indeed I am not. It is a pleasant change in my lonely life to have so lively a young companion; and I am not at all sorry to get a breath of country air and a look at the sea upon so decent an excuse. George and I are 'located' at the inn; so when we become too much for you, just send us away; for I am afraid we are both rather self-indulgent people, and not inclined to think of others' comfort when we are gratifying our own. How is your elder brother?"

Kate answered him gratefully. Knowing how delightful the beginning of the season was to herself, and forgetting that Mr. M'Kenzie's greater age and experience might have rather damped his taste for pleasure, she thought it wonderfully unselfish of him to have even torn himself away from it for a couple of days.

"I don't believe one of the men who take one down to dinner, and are always wanting to do things for one, would dream of taking such a journey to please a little boy," thought Kate, who had apparently forgotten that "comparisons are odious," and was not yet sufficiently conceited to fancy that Mr. M'Kenzie could have taken such a journey for the sole purpose of seeing *her*.

They all walked back to the house together, George and Dottie laden with wild flowers, and the former in a state of rampant excitement over a great plan for surprising Madge on her return. Dottie said little, being conscious that her part in life at present was to listen and

obey, and further divided between the difficulty of holding a stack of flowers almost as big as herself, and not tumbling head over heels over all and each of the stones and twigs which would come in the way of her baby feet; but George held forth volubly, scraps of his monologue floating backwards to Kate and M'Kenzie walking more quietly behind.

"And then I shall be under the sofa, and you are to say"—"As loud a yell as I can"—"but mind, Dottie, you don't even *look* as if—"

Mr. M'Kenzie smiled.

"The happiest age!" he said, a little enviously. "Everything before it, disappointment a word unknown, and every pebble in its path a jewel. I wish one could go back to it."

"I don't," said Kate, who was not of a looking-back temperament, "and I think childish disappointments are keener than all others. I can remember some of mine now, particularly one when Uncle Theo. had promised to take me to a pantomime on my birthday. It was quite an unheard-of thing for him to do, but I was only five years old, and I believe he had taken a fancy to me for something I said or did. Anyhow he promised to come for me on that evening, and I was wild with excitement for two days beforehand, and wilder still when the evening came, and no uncle! Papa and mamma had to go out to dinner, so I sat dressed up in all my finery, and waiting in the drawing-room—for I thought I could hear the first sound of the carriage-wheels better there than in the nursery—and in the end he never came! He had forgotten all about his promise almost as soon as it was given. Do you know, I can recall now the misery of disappointment I suffered, until at last I cried myself to sleep. Papa took me on the following night, and I dare say—in fact, I know—I enjoyed it very much; but no after-pleasure could blot out the past pain, and, you see, I remember it still."

"Poor child!" said Mr. M'Kenzie, smiling on her very kindly. "Poor little child! But it is difficult to imagine you in tears now. I should hardly have thought you had

ever known what crying meant; and you surprise me in another point."

"What is that?" said Kate, as he paused. "But I can cry, I assure you, even now. Sometimes I cry over books—Dickens and—but what is the other thing?"

"I am afraid you would not like me to tell you."

"Indeed I shall. What is it?"

"Well, I did not think you were a girl—I beg your pardon: a young lady—to nurse an injury, however cruel, in your mind. I could fancy you getting very angry at a pinch"—and he smiled—"and perhaps stamping your foot, and withering up an offender with a few hot words; but I did not think it was in your nature to remember the wrong done for years afterwards."

He spoke half in jest, half dreamily; but Kate took it quite *au sérieux*. Indeed, considering that she was rather fond of boasting her indifference to other people's ill opinion, and of asserting that a consciousness of your own rectitude ought to be sufficient for any reasonable person, the young lady betrayed a somewhat suspicious soreness and mortification under this suggestion of blame from her new friend.

"I do not remember it in the way you mean," she said, reddening like a rose, and showing a great disposition to pout. "I was not even angry with Uncle Theo. then—I was too unhappy. It is only the disappointment I remember. Mr. M'Kenzie, please do not think I am so unforgiving and revengeful as all that. I am not: indeed I am not. I may have a quick temper"—and Kate reddened deeper still—"I dare say I have, and that you may have even seen me show it; but I am always very sorry afterwards. Dick knows I am, and—nobody ever minds me: not even the children. If you knew—"

"But I think I do know," Mr. M'Kenzie broke in, looking down with a gentle mingling of liking and amusement into the fair, flushed face. "I could not even fancy you unforgiving or revengeful in the very least. Did I not say so? And as to temper, you must have strangely misunderstood my awkward speech, if

you thought I believed you to have a quicker temper than goes with every warm heart and fresh impulsive mind. Believe me, the person who has lost the power of getting honestly and justly angry, has lost much of what is noble and loving and true into the bargain. No, I spoke from—well, I am afraid from unhappy reminiscences—from the memory of a woman who never forgot, even when she forgave, and whose forgiveness thus lost half, and more than half, of its value; and yet her heart *was* warm—once. Was it that impossibility of forgetting even the smallest wrong which chilled it through and through!"

He had forgotten Kate utterly before he finished, and was talking with his great dark eyes fixed in a sort of feverish yearning on the misty blue horizon, with a quiver of repressed pain about his mouth which made the girl's heart thrill with quick responsive sympathy. She saw plainly that she and all about her had passed out of his mind; but she was not offended. It was only another proof that he was not like other men; and with all her girlish curiosity she wondered who or what was this woman whom he must have loved so passionately, since the mere thought of her blotted out present things; and who had given him nothing but coldness and pain in return—ay, and hard thoughts of other and gentler women for her sake, the girl thought with a faint unconscious resentment against the unknown shade she was conjuring up.

The children were running and laughing through the ferns and underwood before them; but she had forgotten them as he (Dallas) had forgotten her, and walked on in a sort of painful, wondering silence at his side. And yet it was so beautiful around them! The young trees almost leafless yet in this exposed part; or rather only budded over with tender leaflets; but green, green all over, trunk and limbs, and every twig and shoot, with a mossy verdure which gave them the appearance of being covered with some delicate, emerald-hued lichen, and made it difficult to tell where the leaves were out or the branches bare: trees which looked as if they had been lightly sketched in with a brush full of wet green paint on a background

of pale pure cobalt; and springing from a bed of bracken, brown and dry, and making a pleasant contrast to the vivid emerald of meadows beyond. There was nothing to impede the view as in full-leaved summer. You could see from end to end of the copse through this exquisite moss-tinted tracery: could catch the diamond-like leap and flash of the little brook rippling through a bed of reeds on its way to the sea; and beyond the trees the dusky greens and browns, dashed with gold, of the gorse-clad common: and, further still, the broad patches of rich umber-colored plowed land on the hills. A few more steps, and they came out into the full breeze and sunshine of the unsheltered moor, so bright and wind-swept, that all the depression vanished from M'Kenzie like a cloud scattered by the sunbeams: his very step grew more elastic, his eyes lightened, and his lips parted.

"How silent we are!" he said. "Is the day or the scene too lovely for talking;" and then his eye fell on Kate, and he asked, anxiously:

"You are not offended with me, Miss Bellew, are you? I am sure I gave you cause; but bear in mind what a rough old backwoodsman I am, and please forgive me."

"Angry! Oh, no!" said Kate, heartily. It was on her lips to say that the fact of his asking it was an additional proof that he believed in what he had implied as to her capacity for resentment: on her lips, but not in her heart. Have I not told you how prone Katie was to frightening away the young men by sharp speeches, which somehow bubbled up to her tongue without being prompted by any "malice prepense?" It was something too strong for even the girlish impulse to repartee which stayed her speech now; and she had her reward in a grateful smile, and a "thank you" as heartily spoken as her answer.

It was lunch time when they got back to the cottage; and Dallas M'Kenzie noted with a sense of pleasure and amusement Kate's happy flutter, all unspoiled by any shade of embarrassment, at playing sole hostess for the occasion, and the almost childish high spirits which danced in her eyes, and rang in every word she uttered. She was like a child playing at housekeeping, and the girlish

fun mingling with the little solemn affectations of matronhood and sobriety were bewitching enough to charm an anchorite into forgetfulness of his vows.

"A very sweet little girl, large-hearted and simple-minded," Dallas thought to himself. "What a bonny type of an English wife and mother she will make some of these days! I hope she will get a good husband; for upon my life I don't know any young fellow worthy of her."

It may seem strange, but no thought of himself came into his mind with the suggestion; and yet I doubt if, just then, he would have resented the idea if propounded, or offered other objection than—"Bah, I am too old by a dozen years for her," or "My day for that sort of thing has passed." They all went into the garden after lunch, and sat under the almond-tree, talking and looking over the sea, till, on the boat with Dick and Madge in it coming into sight, George insisted that Mr. M'Kenzie should retire out of view, and Kate lend her aid in his "surprise." He had planned it all beforehand; but, when it came to the point, was not contented with any of the hiding-places suggested; and was still standing in the middle of the floor, wavering between the choice of a cupboard or a window-curtain, when the door opened—there was a loud shriek, "George!!"—and Madge flung herself upon him, and nearly knocked him down with the vehemence of her greeting.

The boat had come to land sooner than was expected, and it was George who was surprised after all.

Dick joined the party in a few minutes; and, to Kate's great relief, forgave his younger brother's arrival in pleasure at having a fellow-man to talk to. He had seen very little of Dallas M'Kenzie, and the two, being neither of an age nor a temperament to assimilate, had not cared much for one another; but Dallas liked Kate sufficiently to pardon a great deal in her relations; and Dick was so glad to see some one with the latest news from London, that he put on his best colors, and made the guest so heartily welcome that Dallas thought the young man had his good points in him after all. Kate felt highly de-

lighted; for her brother had been growling ominously the last two or three days about not having a soul, man or woman, to speak to besides his own family; and she *had* found a friend, a very interesting one of her own sex, of whom more must be said hereafter, but of whom she had said nothing to any one: albeit her conscience reproached her for keeping any pleasure, however small, a secret from the brother she would have liked to have shared it with. Mr. M'Kenzie's arrival was therefore doubly pleasant to her when she saw that it pleased Dick; and she sat between them radiant with smiles, and managing with pretty womanly tact to draw out just the good points in each which could be best appreciated in the other.

There would be greater peace and goodwill in the world did women always employ their tact in a similar manner.

Mr. M'Kenzie stayed two or three days, very pleasant days, during which Kate came to know and like him better than she had ever done before; and Dick did not lose his temper once! At the beginning of their stay he had received one or two unpleasant letters (one from Clive), over which he had sworn viciously, and which had left him moody and irritable for the whole day afterwards; but apparently their remembrance had passed out of his mind by now; and Kate, somewhat unjustly, attributed the favorable alteration to the change of friends.

"There is something about Mr. Clive which *makes* people cross and disagreeable; I am glad he is not here," the young lady thought, with uncharitable fervor. "Mr. M'Kenzie never blames Dick, or roughs him up. How different the dear boy is with him!"

If that thought was wrong, it was most decidedly punished, and with no lack of speed. On the third morning of Mr. M'Kenzie's stay, Dick laid down a letter, over which he had been growling through the chief part of breakfast, with the remark:

"See that there is something decent for dinner to-day, Kate. Clive's coming."

"Coming—coming *here*!" cried Kate, with a ludicrous face of dismay. "What for? Has anything happened?"

"Happened? Nonsense! Don't look as if you had swallowed a donkey, hoofs and all" (certainly Clive's letters had not a soothing effect on Dick's mind or manners). "What should have happened? I asked him long ago to run down and see me if he possibly could; and he says he is coming from Saturday (that is to-day) till Monday. I suppose there are plenty of rooms to be got at the inn, M'Kenzie?"

Dallas said he believed that there were. He was breakfasting with them, and looked with some surprise at the unwonted disturbance on his young hostess's brow. Perhaps the idea crossed his mind that it might be occasioned by the prospective trouble of having two guests to entertain—"poor child!"—and accordingly, as soon as breakfast was over, and Dick had gone up to the inn, to engage a room for Clive, he said:

"I hope George won't think me very barbarous if I carry him off to town again to-day. I really think I ought not to stay away any longer."

Kate was folding up the newspaper which Dick had left upon the floor. She dropped it again when he spoke, facing round upon him with a most genuine expression of concern.

"To-day! Oh, Mr. M'Kenzie, do not. What can you want in town before Monday at any rate? Yes, we should all think you very barbarous to go, just as Mr. Clive is coming too, and you are really wanted."

"But, my dear Miss Bellew, it is just because Mr. Clive is coming that I should think I could not be wanted. It is very good and sweet of you to make me so welcome; but still, to have two gentlemen on your hands at once—"

"But you are not on my hands," cried Kate, quite laughing at the idea, "and Mr. Clive is so—well, I ought not to abuse him, and I dare say he means well, and is very good, and all that (Dick likes him, you know, so there must be some good in him), but if you would stop just while he is here, I should be—it would make it so much more pleasant," and Kate looked up in almost childish pleading. M'Kenzie smiled at the pretty, con-

fused, coaxing jumble, and felt glad he was not Bernard Clive, to be the subject of such barely veiled dislike.

"Of course I will stay if you wish it," he said. "Do you think it is so unpleasant to me? I don't care very much about improving Mr. Clive's acquaintance; but not from any dislike to him, for I have always heard of him as a very clever, honorable young man, and—"

"Perfect in every way!" put in Kate, spitefully. "There!" (recollecting herself), "see how petty even talking of him makes me! but I can't help it—indeed I can't; and he can't bear me, so that I am not wholly to blame. By the way, did you not meet him abroad?"

"Yes," said M'Kenzie (a very simple answer, which stopped the utterance of sundry more questions on Kate's lips, and set her pondering, without knowing why). Five minutes later she came out with the result of her meditations.

"I wish I could hold my tongue."

"Do you?" said M'Kenzie, laughing outright at the abruptness of the speech, and the comically penitent look which accompanied it; "I am sure I don't."

"Then you ought to do so," cried Kate, too remorseful to heed his mirth. "If I had no tongue, I should be quite good—really good—and now I am not. Of course it is wrong to go on sneering at Mr. Clive, when he is one of Dick's friends too. It is not even dignified or ladylike, and you must know it is not; but it is only a way of talking, Mr. M'Kenzie. We never have liked each other, but—"

"But you would hardly rejoice if a railway accident smashed him up into infinitesimal atoms coming down here," Dallas suggested. "No, Miss Bellew, don't be afraid. I lay very little stress on enmities so frankly avowed; and as to Mr. Clive disliking you—"

"But he does," cried Kate, clasping her hands together to give emphasis to the sentence. "You've no idea how he does. Why" (with a look which, added to the *naïveté* of the conclusion, made M'Kenzie's eyes dance), "that is just why I don't like him."

"A very natural and proper reason," Dallas said,

gravely. "And so you want me to help in keeping the peace, and reminding you that 'your little hands were never meant to tear each other's eyes.' Is not that quoted correctly? Very well. I had reasons for not caring to grow more intimate with Mr. Clive than was necessary; but in such a cause of course they vanish. Let me make one request, however. If you don't want me to dislike your friend even more than you do, please put off that very grave little face. You have been looking so bright till now, that we could not easily feel in charity with any one who spoiled our house sunshine."

Kate laughed and promised. She was indeed feeling too happy to care much for the mere prospect of Clive's grave looks and strictures. True, the brightness faded a little when she found that M'Kenzie was not going to dine with them that day; but she said hardly a word to press him, for had not Dick spoken something about business to discuss with Clive, and was it not therefore most delicate and thoughtful in the other guest to discover that an old school acquaintance of his had a living some eight miles off, and must be visited on this special evening? The brightness came back in a minute, and M'Kenzie's good-byes were sweetened by a smile which made even the sunshine look dull and cheerless by comparison during the first part of his ride. For the first time an idea came into his mind so strange as to startle him. At first he rejected it with prompt decision; but it came back again and knocked persistently for admittance.

"She likes me already, likes and trusts me as though I were an old friend, instead of a comparative stranger. Would it be hard to turn such liking into love, and keep that living sunshine for my own?"

Verily and indeed a strange idea, and one not to be lightly entertained by Dallas M'Kenzie. Did not the shadow of another woman stand between him and the possession of any such sunshine as he coveted? He put the idea away from him with a shivering frown, and rode on gloomily.

CHAPTER XIX.

AN UNSOCIABLE ARTIST.

I HAVE heard women say that it is sometimes necessary to go back in a piece of fancy work, and pick up dropped stitches, the want of which might impair the symmetry of the entire pattern. In like manner I must go back now in my narrative, and mention a little incident which, trifling as it seemed, was not without importance in the history of Kate Bellew's life.

Is anything without importance, by the way, in this world of ours, and have not the very gravest events in the whole history of man sometimes hung upon the slightest pegs? For my part it is always the *little* things and first steps which I look after. The big things, the crises and crashes of life, must generally be left to God. They are out of our power to remedy or control when they have come to their full ripeness. If we want to prevent a tree from bearing fruit, we must nip off the buds in spring time.

Not many days after their arrival at Combe Regis, Kate had occasion to go over to the nearest town, to cash a check her mother had sent her. It was Dick's duty to go of course, Kate knowing about as much of business as a fly of farming; but Dick had a sick-headache; and though his sister privately thought the air would do it more good than lying on the sofa smoking endless paper cigars, she only ventured to suggest as much very gently; and her suggestion being received with a somewhat indignant contradiction, the young lady acquiesced at once with a good-humored:

"Well, never mind, dear, only as there is that check to be cashed to-day, I shall have to leave you and go about it myself."

"What a bore!" said Dick, lazily; "can't Martin go?"

"No, she doesn't know the way; and besides, she can't walk a mile. You know she's got a stiff knee or something."

"A stiff humbug! I believe it's nothing but laziness. But you can't go alone, Kittie."

"Oh! Madge will go with me. It's not much over six miles there and back; and we went much further yesterday along the coast."

"All right, only you'll have to make haste; for I suppose country banks close at the same time as London ones; and make haste back—I'm sure if any one were to read aloud it would do my confounded head good."

"You shall have some reading aloud in the evening, M. Exigeant; that is, if you're good—not unless," said Kate, laughing and kissing him; and then the two girls ran upstairs to dress for their walk, and Dick was left to his cigar.

"I hope Kittie will never take it into her head to get married," he said to himself, with that pure unselfishness which was the leading characteristic of this young man's mind. "She's a comfortable sort of girl to have about one in a house: a little too peppery perhaps, and apt to go off like a squib on romantic rhodomontades of honor and that sort of thing, but one might get a worse in the way of a sister. Now there's Fanny, confound her!—the most bewitching little gipsy in existence; but even if she were a lady and an heiress, which she isn't—and my wife into the bargain, which, as it is, she can't be—I should like to have Kate about the house. She knows my ways, you see, and of course she knows it's her duty to give in to them, and make a fellow decently comfortable; but Fanny's so deucedly obstinate, she expects you to give in to her, and *her* ways; and until she'd learned her place, there would be breezes. There's nothing takes it out of a fellow like rows at home—*nothing*; and Kate never makes a row about anything. I do hope she won't be

wanting to clear off with some one, one of these fine days; but girls are so confoundedly selfish, one can never depend on them for an hour together."

And Dick stretched himself out on the sofa with a weary yawn, and went to sleep.

The two girls, in the meanwhile, had set out briskly on the road to Greybridge, the little town to which they were bound. Madge was in high spirits at having her sister "all to herself" for a walk, and chattered away as fast as she walked, so that the road was got over in no time; and they had reached Greybridge, cashed their check, and had even made a purchase of one or two articles which Combe Regis was too primitive to produce, before five striking from the old church-tower in the High Street warned them that it was time to return.

"I feel as fresh as if I could run the whole way," said Madge, as they struck into the lanes again. "Isn't it a lovely afternoon?—and oh! look at that goldfinch, Katie; I wonder if he has a nest in the hedge."

"Don't go after him with those parcels," said Kate, "and be content with walking, Madgie. If you frisk about in that way you'll tumble down in another minute, and spill all the biscuits into the road."

And then, in the very moment of speaking, the thing she prophesied came to pass. Madge was scampering from one side to the other of the road, as first one thing and then another attracted her attention, when she caught her foot against a stone, and came headlong to the ground, sending her parcels and their contents flying into the dust and gravel. Kate ran and picked her up, more vexed than compassionate at first.

"There, Madge! I told you so. What a pity it is you are such a tomboy! and nearly thirteen too! Do look at the tea all spilled and wasted; and the biscuits too. One can gather them up, but—"

"I've hurt myself," said Madge, "don't scold me, Katie, I didn't mean it, and I'm very sorry; but I've hurt my foot. Oh! I've hurt it awfully," and, after one futile attempt at standing upright, she subsided into a sitting position in the middle of the dusty lane, and began to

cry. Kate knelt down beside her, all sympathy in a moment.

"My poor child! I am so sorry. Let me look at it. Do—I won't hurt you, indeed," and with very tender fingers, Madge flinching and almost screaming during the process, she proceeded to take off the girl's boot and stocking, and lay bare the wounded member.

Madge stopped her tears to look at it, and then broke out afresh at the sight of the blood.

"I've broken my ankle, and I shan't be able to walk all the rest of the time we are here," she sobbed, dolefully.

"Oh! no, you haven't," said Kate, who had been examining the injury. "You've bruised your instep, and taken the skin off your ankle and shin; and I think you may have strained it a little; but that's all; so don't cry, Madgie dear, there's a brave girl. I really think you could stand if you tried. Put your foot down on my handkerchief, and see."

"Do you think it is really not broken?" asked Madge, a little reassured by Kate's tone; and then she did as advised, and stood up.

"It hurts dreadfully," she said, sitting down again after a trial of a few seconds. "I can stand; but I'm sure I couldn't walk a dozen yards; and it is such a long way home. Katie, what shall we do?"

"I think we had better wait a little," said Kate, trying to speak more cheerfully than she felt. "Perhaps the pain will go off in a few minutes if you let the foot rest. Here, Madge, lean on me, and try to hop to the bank under the hedge. I would carry you if I could, but you're too heavy; and you will be more comfortable there."

Madge obeyed, but the movement evidently gave her great pain; and Kate felt seriously unhappy. The fact was, she did not know what to do. They were more than half a mile from Greybridge, and quite two and a half from Combe Regis. In Madge's present state it was equally impossible for her to walk to one as to the other. They were off the highroad, too, where people would be likely to be passing; and if Kate were to go

back to Greybridge for assistance, she would be obliged to leave Madge alone—an idea which she did not like at all. Suppose the pain were to get worse while she were away, and Madge were to faint; and suppose some cattle came by and trampled her, or a tipsy man, or even a savage dog! All sorts of alarming possibilities came into her mind as she sat thinking over it. And when she said at last, "I think, Madgie, I shall have to go back to the town, and see if I can't find a vehicle of some sort to take you home in," her voice had an uncertain ring in it, which made Madge hold tighter to the arm which was supporting her, and cry out:

"Oh! don't leave me alone, Kate. That would be worst of all. I shouldn't mind it a bit if I could run away from anything; but don't leave me as I am."

"But, my dear Madgie, what are we to do? We can't sit here all the evening; and I don't think even if your foot got better you ought to walk on it. It looks as if it were swelling now."

Madge felt it, and said it was. "It doesn't hurt nearly so much," she said, hopefully.

But Kate shook her head. She knew walking was out of the question now; and though she smiled, it was partly to hide the glimmer of tears in her eyes as she repeated:

"I don't know what we are to do."

"If we wait a little, some one may pass whom we can send back to town for a wheel-barrow," said Madge, with a brave effort at laughing. "Don't look so awfully sorry for me, Katie. It really doesn't hurt now."

"Hush!" Kate broke in, holding up her finger.

There was a sound of wheels not far off; and, leaving go of Madge, she ran to the nearest opening in the lane, and saw to her great joy a light cart coming along the road, and driven by a man whose face she fancied was familiar to her. She was right. He lived at Combe Regis, had been sent with a load of grain to Greybridge that morning, and was returning now with the empty sacks.

"Eh, zure he'd be roight glad to take t' young missus

home wi' un if her foot wur hurted. Her could sit on t' sacks, an' ride like a queen fur zure."

Kate, looking into the weather-beaten, kindly old face, with its fringe of whitish-gray hair hanging round it under the battered straw hat, thought so too; and Madge was delighted. To ride in a cart, albeit destitute of springs, was too delightful a sequel to her adventure to be rejected by the little Londoner; and she was speedily seated on a throne of sacks, with her foot well supported, and begging Kate to assume a seat beside her. But Kate shook her head.

"No, thank you! You may think an hour's ride in a cart along a dusty road Paradise—"

"It's a great deal nicer than a stupid cab or carriage, I'm sure," interrupted Madge. "How envious Flo de Ponsonby will be! She's never ridden in a cart in all her life. I'll write and tell her about it to-night."

"All right, so you don't ask me to make another theme for envy. I shall be home before you, if I go by the lanes, and shall have hunted out the arnica from whatever box it's in," said Kate. "Are you sure you are comfortable, and that your foot doesn't hurt now?"

And on receiving a hearty assent to both questions, the elder girl nodded a smiling farewell, and turned back into the lane to take the short cut home.

It was much pleasanter walking there than along the broad high road, three inches deep in dust, and bordered by interminable straight hedge-rows, also as white as a miller's boy with the same gritty impalpable substance; much pleasanter to wend along deep winding lanes, with tall trees just putting out their leaves in a green arch overhead, and high hawthorns budded over with rosy white bloom, tangled blackberry bushes, and nests of purple and white violets sending out sweet fragrance from their covert of dark sheltering leaves on either side; to climb over a stile here, and cross a meadow—the velvety grass all gemmed with golden cowslips—there; or pick up her petticoats, and spring daintily from stepping-stone to stepping-stone across a narrow foaming stream. In performing the latter feat she sent a stone splashing

into the water, and uttered a little cry, which apparently startled some one near, for there was a sudden rustling of garments, and a face strangely beautiful, but pale and nervous, rose up from behind a tree, where its owner had been sitting, and glanced with a frightened, anxious expression at Kate. It was a lady, tall and painfully delicate-looking, dressed in white of some thick material, with a black lace scarf knotted round her throat, and a quantity of light golden hair coiled very loosely at the back of her head, from which the scarf had fallen. She had risen from a little camp-stool set under the shelter of the trees, letting fall in the act a whole lapful of paints and brushes which, in conjunction with an easel supporting a half-finished picture, showed what her occupation had been.

"I am afraid I startled you," said Kate, coming forward with ready courtesy to assist in picking up the scattered tubes of color. "I slipped in crossing the brook, and after having had one accident to-day—but how—how lovely! I beg your pardon, but are you really doing this?"

"Do you think I have got the effect?" said the lady, smiling. She had recovered her composure now, for the hectic spot of red in either cheek which had succeeded her late pallor looked more like latent fever than recent agitation. There was a little look of amusement in her eyes as Kate made that ecstatic bound towards the picture, and bent over it with clasped hands and eager eyes, as if she were devouring it. M'Kenzie might well say that Miss Bellew had a most thorough appreciation for art.

"It does not last long," she added, "but I thought the sunlight on the under side of those leaves made too beautiful an effect to be lost."

Kate looked where she pointed, and owned it was beautiful. They were standing at the entrance to a steep narrow lane, bordered on one side by a row of large elms in full leaf. The sun was setting, and these trees stood up in the foreground above the sinking orb, green above and gold below. Every tender transparent leaf was lined with gold. There were golden splashes on the gray mossy

trunks, broken glints and specks and drops of gold flecking the whole dim avenue with glittering touches. In the western sky the sun, like a huge globe of fire, was descending through a bath of liquid glory from a sky all tender opaline tints of rose and cream, and threw a reflected blush of deep pink on the palings of Datherly Park in the east, behind which a thick belt of dark, impenetrable, gray-green foliage stood up in sombre contrast to the ethereal glow above.

The artist's picture was as yet only roughly sketched in with color; but it was sufficient to show the general effect, and give a fair idea of how excellent the finished work would be.

"I envy you," said Kate, in her abrupt way, as she turned again from the scene to the picture. "I would give—oh! everything in the world to know how to paint even half as well as this, and I cannot even daub. I have taken lots of drawing lessons, and I've learned to draw triangles, and wheelbarrows, and logs of wood; and you can't tell one from another when they're done. I do envy you!"

There was no preventing a smile at the ludicrously dismal tone in which this was said, or rather jerked out, as much to herself as to the artist; and the latter's thin, sad face lightened up in a little amused laugh. It sobered down again almost immediately, and she said very gravely:

"Do not begin to envy me because I can make a sketch which you cannot. Perhaps you have a hundred better gifts for this one little talent of mine."

"Indeed I have not," said Kate. "You mean talents too, I suppose, but you are wrong. I can sing a little, and—and I can write poetry, and that is all I can do."

[And that "all" was incorrect. Kate could sing very well, and she could not write poetry at all, but only very bad rhymes; but that is a nicety of distinction which young women—and men too—do not in general seem capable of comprehending.—AUTHOR.]

"I think that singing is even a more pleasurable gift than painting," said the lady. She was going on with her picture again now, and seemed to speak more from

kindness than a desire to prolong the conversation. "It is less disappointing; and if you can sing your own poetry— But," she added, breaking off suddenly with the same nervous look she had worn before, "you spoke of an accident. You have not been riding, I see. Do you belong to a party, and—"

"No; I am alone," said Kate, wondering a little at the look of relief which greeted this intelligence, "and the accident happened to my sister. She hurt her foot, and has had to be taken home in a cart."

"But there is no way for a cart down here," said the stranger, glancing back at the stream. "It is only a footway. Indeed, I thought people very seldom came by it. They told me so at the farm."

"And I should think they were right," answered Kate. "We did not meet a soul when we went to Greybridge this morning. No; Madge has had to go home by the road; and that is why I am glad to rest"—she had sat down on the roots of the tree—"for it is such a long way round, and the horse looked so stiff and old, I am sure it will be a good hour before they get to Combe Regis."

"You live at Combe Regis?" said the artist, painting away busily.

"We are lodging there—my brother, and my two little sisters, and I. Do you know it? It is the quaintest little village."

"No; I have heard the name, but—" There was an anxious look in her face, as if she were trying to think where. She added abruptly, "I had no idea it was near. Is it?"

"About two miles off only. You should come over there. You have no idea what lovely sketches you would find down by the beach, and it is a very pretty walk this way."

The stranger shook her head.

"I am not strong enough to try it," she said, very decidedly. "I have been ill, and am only here for perfect rest and quiet, and freedom from strangers."

It was not a very courteous speech, but Kate was too taken up with the pale, beautiful face, and soft, sweet

voice, to hear the innuendo. Had she done so, she could not possibly have taken it as intended for *her*. Was not every one always glad to see her? A lonely artist invalid could never wish to drive away a young woman whom most people delighted to seek out!

"I suppose you are living at the farm there, then?" she said, compassionately, and pointing to a cluster of dark red chimneys just visible above a bend in the lane. "But how dull it must be for you if you are ill! I hope you have plenty of books, and that *you* are not alone."

"Yes; I am alone," said the lady; "but I have plenty of books—at least, for the present; and I do not care about society."

This was plainer, and Kate felt hurt. Yet surely those sweet blue eyes could not mean to look cold.

"Then I suppose you would not care to see us," she said, in a rather offended tone, and getting up as she spoke. "I was going to have asked you to come over to see us when you felt stronger; or— But perhaps you would rather not."

"Yes, I would rather not," said the lady, quietly. "But I thank you very much for your kindness in thinking of it. I am not strong enough for visiting, or receiving visitors," she added, in a firmer tone.

Kate was thoroughly affronted.

"Good afternoon," she said, flushing very much. "I am sorry I interrupted your work;" and then she walked off very briskly, and with her head mightily erect. The young lady had been snubbed!

The artist sat looking after her with a half-sigh, half-smile, on her pale lips. "I am afraid I was rude," she murmured, "and it was kindly meant; but the name startled me; and, for anything I know, it might be the girl I have so often heard of. Combe Regis?—Yes; that was the place they were going to; and I had no idea it was within miles of this. Had I better go away, I wonder? But I have so little strength, and it seems as if wherever I went I stumbled upon somebody who knows me. Besides, *she* evidently does not know me. She may not be in any way connected with those

people. Combe Regis may be a favorite watering-place in these parts, though I don't know of it. I had better stay here: I *must* stay here till I get stronger. The doctor said if I did not take perfect rest I should have a nervous fever; and how dreadful to be laid up with that here! I do not think she will ever come near me again, whoever she is" (and she smiled sadly); "but what a pretty, impetuous creature the girl was! It went to my heart to check her cordiality as I did. There! the sun has gone down now, so I had better put up my paints, and go home."

Kate meanwhile was well on her way to Combe Regis. She was walking very quickly, and the red was still high in her cheeks. Also she breathed hard, and was altogether in a state of lively indignation, which did not begin to subside till she was within sight of the roofs and chimney-pots of the little seaside village.

"I never was so treated before," she said to herself. "A total stranger! and when I was so kindly talking to her, and almost asking her to come and see us and all, just because she looked pretty, and delicate, and painted well. To answer me so rudely! I wonder what Dick will say when he hears."

And then a doubt of what Dick *would* say when he heard came over Kate's mind, and her step slackened, and the color softened in her cheek. Suppose—it was not a pleasant possibility—but suppose Dick were to laugh at her, and tell her she had made a fool of herself. He was always teasing her for her thoughtless, impulsive ways, and accusing her of "gushing" on some people, and snubbing others, without due cause. Might he not say that in pressing an acquaintance on this stranger she had gushed unwarrantably, and been justly snubbed? Perhaps this artist was some grand lady rustivating down here in incognito (here came out Kate's romance), and had taken her for a presuming village girl (the pink cheeks grew red again at the idea); or perhaps she was the farmer's sister, some fine lady's maid, home from service, and unwilling to betray her station by making acquaintance with gentle people. No, that idea could

not be correct. Ladies' maids did not paint as this lady painted, or speak in that sweet, high-bred tone, or look like duchesses for grace and dignity. The former idea was much more likely to be the correct one; and when Kate thought over it, it was strengthened by a strange sort of familiarity in the face which struck her all the while she was speaking to the stranger. It was not a face which she knew, but one which she had seen; or perhaps it was a strong resemblance to one she had seen. But where? Ah! that was the question; for, think as she might, she could not connect the flash of memory with any particular person or place.

"It must have been in the Row," she said, at last—"one of those faces which pass one in the carriages, and grow familiar without one even being aware of it. Well, she might have been more civil. I don't think I *will* say anything about her; Dick would be sure to laugh at me; and I'm not certain he wouldn't be right."

And then Kate put the stranger out of her mind, and hurried home briskly, for there was the cart standing at the door. It was not till night time, when the girls were going to bed, that Madge exclaimed:

"Why, Kate—where is your other earring? You've only one in."

Kate put up her hand with a quick gesture, and uttered a corresponding cry of annoyance.

"It must have dropped out," she said. "When did I feel it last? Oh! just after crossing that brook. It caught in my ruffle, and I twitched it away. Good gracious! I hope it didn't drop among the grass there."

CHAPTER XX.

MRS. GREY AGAIN.

IT certainly was not in the cottage, for Kate searched for it both that evening and in the morning ; and the more she thought of it, the more the conviction grew upon her that it must have dropped out either when she gave it that hasty twitch, or when she was stooping to pick up the artist's paints. In that case, she would have to go back for it ; and the idea was not pleasant, more especially as Dick had started off for a day's fishing ; Madge's foot, though better, was not up to any great exertion ; and Dottie was too little for so long a walk.

"I must go alone," Kate thought, with a little "moue" of disgust, "for I don't want to lose it—such a pretty one ; and poor papa's last present, too ; but I do hope and trust she won't be there again."

She was not. When Kate got near the spot, she stopped, and cast a timid glance downward towards the little knot of trees, and the glimmer of foaming water, beside which she had encountered the artist on the previous day. There did not seem to be any one there, or near there, at present ; and, much reassured, Kate descended to the spot, and began searching for her lost trinket among the weeds and grasses where she had stood. It was not there ; and after a search of at least ten minutes, she was just rising to go home without her earring, when there was a quick step behind her, and a voice, weak and breathless from haste, said :

"Are you looking for this ? I found it after you were gone yesterday."

Kate turned round sharply, and found herself face to face with her uncourteous friend-of the previous day, but looking far more ill than then, the lips almost colorless, and dark lines round the beautiful blue eyes. Her voice was almost gone from weakness, as she added :

"I saw you from a distance, and ran. I was afraid you would be gone before—"

She stopped to pant ; and Kate felt her righteous anger melting away in pity.

"Thank you," she said, trying to speak coldly. "I am sorry you had the trouble to come after me with it. I only missed it last night." And then she put out her hand for the little pearl earring, adding, as she took it, "Oh, what a pity! one of the drops is gone."

"Surely not. They were all there when I picked it up," said the lady ; then, after a moment's pause to examine it, "Ah! it has come unhooked, I see. Very likely it is lying on my table now ; for I picked it up in a hurry as I started. If you do not mind waiting a moment, I will go back and fetch it for you."

"I am very sorry to trouble you," said Kate. "Please let me go with you—that is, if you do not mind," her face flushing, and her voice unconsciously altering.

The invalid looked at her, first keenly, then smiling. There was something in those candid brown eyes—in the petulant curve of the sweet childlike mouth—in every line and dimple of Kate's frank fair face, which invited confidence and rebuked distrust. With an involuntary impulse for which she could not account even to herself, the stranger put out her thin white hand, and answered :

"I would gladly take more trouble for you ; for I am afraid I was very rude to you yesterday. Will you forgive me?"

It was said so sweetly, and with such a look at once dignified and pleading, that Kate could not resist taking the offered hand in her little plump pink-tipped fingers, and pressing it cordially.

"Do not speak of it," she said. "You—that is, I had no right to—"

"To speak kindly to a lonely stranger," put in the lady,

by way of assisting her confusion. "But I think it was very good and amiable of you; and I have been thinking so ever since I drove you away so ungraciously; but I have been so ill lately—I am so out of health now—and crushed by troubles of one sort and another, that I dread the very sight of mankind about me."

"But I am not mankind," said Kate, laughing.

She was quite appeased now.

"No, but—forgive me—young ladies generally bring mankind in their train—fathers, brothers, lovers and friends; and though I am indeed so lonely that the sight of your face is very grateful to me, I could not bear to be brought into contact with—"

"My train?" laughed Kate, very merrily; "but indeed you are wrong. I am quite a stranger down here, taking care of my two little sisters; and though I have one brother with me (the dearest fellow), I will not even tell him about you unless you like."

"Then you have not done so already?" said the lady, a look of almost grateful relief in her face.

Kate laughed again, and blushed into the bargain.

"No, because—well," in her impetuously truthful way, "because I was afraid I had made a fool of myself, and I thought Dick would tell me so; so I said nothing to any of them. Would you like me not to do so now?"

"You are so honest," said the lady, smiling. "Do you mind my being honest too, and saying, 'Yes'?"

They were at the gate leading to the farm, and the lady stopped and leaned upon it, to gather breath before going further. Kate offered her her arm, and was shocked to feel how the thin wrist trembled upon it; and how the hand burned, as if with inward fever. Neither spoke till they stood in the tiny sitting-room which the stranger tenanted, and then it was Kate who pulled forward a chair for its owner, and said, anxiously:

"I am afraid you are very ill. Let me get you a glass of water, or something," and suiting the action to the word, she hastily poured some water from a decanter standing on the table into a glass, and brought it to the invalid, who drank it eagerly, and then thanked her both with eyes and words.

"How very kind you are! But now that you see how much strength I have, you will not wonder at my shunning anything which can diminish it, and perhaps lay me up altogether. You do not know what it is to be very, very ill among strangers, and have no one who cares for you, nor no one you care for, near to speak a word of sympathy or comfort."

"No," said Kate, shivering at the mere idea. "I have never been alone anywhere in all my life. We are a large family at home, and mamma spoils us all. I am the most spoiled, however, because Dick (that's my eldest brother) spoils me too, and I think I spoil myself. I always expect to have my own way in everything, and Eve often says I'm frightfully selfish, because I always do what pleases me first, without thinking whether it is pleasant to others. You saw that exemplified yesterday;" and Kate laughed at herself now. The stranger looked at her very kindly.

"I think you would find it difficult to *dis*please any one," she said. "Is Eve one of your sisters?"

"Yes; the next to me; but a boy comes in between. She is only fifteen, and very ill just now, poor darling! with scarlet fever. That is why we are down here. Mamma sent us away lest we should catch the infection, though I would much rather have stayed to nurse her. I tease poor Evey awfully about being cold and prim, but she's a million times better than I am, and never gets into scrapes."

Kate was not looking at her hostess, or she would have seen a change come over her face. The hectic spot was glowing in either cheek again, and there was a feverish brightness in her eyes, a forced quietness in her voice, as she said:

"You have not told me your name, yet."

"Bellew," said Kate—"Kate Bellew; at least I was christened Katherine, but every one calls me Kate. My mother is Lady Margaret Bellew, and we live in London."

"I know—at least, I mean I have heard the name."

There was something faint and peculiar in the voice now, and Kate looked up curiously.

"Do you live in London also?" she said. "Your face is so familiar to me that the more I look at it, the more I feel I must have seen it somewhere. Was it in the Row or—stay! I have a dim idea—was it not at one of Lady Vanborough's receptions?"

"I have been in London," said the lady, quietly—the expression of her face had changed. The lips were set firmly, and there was a sort of pathetic defiance in the eyes—"but I do not think I have ever met you at the Row, or receptions. Are you sure it is I of whom you are thinking, and not of a relative of mine?"

Kate looked puzzled.

"I have seen some one like you," she said, "and yet—"

"If it was at Lady Vanborough's, I think it must be Mrs. Grey you mean," said the lady, coldly. "I did not know she had ever seen you, though."

"But I think I saw her once. Yes, it must have been she," Kate cried, quite delighted. "It was on the stairs, and I had only a glimpse of her; but I saw the likeness to you at once, though I had forgotten all about it. And so she is a relation of yours! How funny it seems! for Bee has spoken so much of her; and I have taken quite an interest in her myself."

"Indeed! Why! She is only Lady Vanborough's companion," said the invalid, still coldly.

"But Lady Vanborough praises her so much, and—that is not my reason, however, for caring about her," said Kate, honestly, "but because a gentleman, a great friend of my brother's, is in love with her, and being in love makes him so dreadfully disagreeable, that I have been wishing she would marry him. There comes out my selfishness, you see," added Kate, laughing; "but if you knew how unpleasant it is to have your friends always snapping at you because another woman is unkind to them!"

The invalid smiled, but in rather a chilly manner still.

"I think I have heard Mrs. Grey speak of something of the sort," she said, slowly; "but I thought the gentle-

man lived in the country, far from London. How can his snapping worry you?"

"Ah, you mean Mr. Philip Clive!" cried Kate. "Yes, Bee told me he was in love with her too; but I mean his brother Bernard, who lives in London, and—dear me! though, I have no right to be talking about him or the lady this way. It is very wrong of me. What a pity I can't think before I speak!" and poor Kate, who had been chattering away in her usual impulsive manner, checked herself abruptly, and almost bit her lips with vexation. The invalid put out a hand, and stroked hers gently.

"Do not mind. It is a dangerous habit, though, and you will do well to check it; but in this case you are quite safe, for, as I tell you, I see no one, and I will be very careful never to repeat a word you have said."

"Thank you," said Kate, dolefully; "but that doesn't make it less bad of me. Still, as you knew of it, it does not so much matter; and I wish you would advise your relation not to keep Mr. Clive in suspense much longer, for really, you know, it is very trying to a man's temper;" and Kate nodded her head as sagaciously as though she were the mother of a dozen sons.

"I am afraid my wishes and Mrs. Grey's opinions are too different for me to advise her," said the invalid, gently; "but are you sure Mr. Clive has told her that he—what you told me?"

Kate owned she was not sure, but said that she had taken it for granted.

"I think you are mistaken," her friend answered, gravely. "It is to be hoped so; though, indeed, it is to be hoped that you are mistaken altogether; for were you right, I know that Mrs. Grey would never give him the answer he would wish. She does not intend to marry again."

"She may change her mind," said Kate. "Ladies often do. I'm always changing mine."

"You are a very young girl, and Mrs. Grey is a woman past thirty in years alone, and nearer fifty in everything else," answered the invalid. "Besides, in this case she

has no temptation to do so, for she feels nothing beyond the simplest liking, which you might have, for either of the people you have spoken of."

"If she doesn't like Mr. Clive more than I do!" cried Kate, lifting her eyebrows and clasping her hands with an emphasis which said far more than the words—"But there! I am forgetting again. I can't think what is the matter with me to-day, or whether it is something in you which makes me inclined to chatter at this rate. Do you know, I have said more uncharitable and mischievous gossiping things to-day than I usually say in a week. If I were a Roman Catholic, I would rush right off and confess them, and be penitent while I'm going through the horrid list. What a pity one can't!"

"Don't you think it is equally good to remember and feel penitent for them when you are by yourself?" asked the other, smiling, as she took Kate's hand.

"Well, no," said Kate, "because, you see, unfortunately, as I'm not obliged to confess them, I forget to remember them, and to be penitent for them too. Good-bye. May I come and see you again when the picture is finished?"

"You may come whenever you like, or whenever you are good enough," the invalid answered, heartily.

"And I suppose I may not bring my sisters? I don't think you are strong enough for Madge. She is noisier than I am, and if she fell in love with you she would certainly bring Dick to share it; but if little Dottie could walk so far—"

"I should like to see her very much," answered the invalid; and then Kate shook hands and departed. It was not until she had left the lane behind, and climbed half-way up the hill, that she remembered she did not even know her new friend's name.

She had forgotten to ask it, and the other had, perhaps, forgotten to tell it; but, indeed, the more Kate thought of her visit, the more she realized how very communicative she had been, and how very limited were the communications she had received in return. She had prattled away about everything—herself, her sisters' names and

characters and station, about Lady Vanborough and Mr. Clive, and, worst of all, the stranger's own relation. Lady Vanborough's companion; and in return the stranger had — listened to her! It was rather mortifying, but Kate could not remember a single item of information which she had gathered from the invalid, save and excepting the fact that she was related to Mrs. Grey. "Which I might have guessed by the likeness," thought Miss Bellow, with a renewed perception of that unpleasant sensation; "I have made a fool of myself. I declare I ought to be put into a convent for perpetual silence and meditation for a year, just to teach me to hold my tongue. Well, never mind; next time I will ask questions and nothing more. I don't think she would repeat anything I said to-day. She looks too perfect a lady to take advantage of my foolishness. I wonder what she is, by the way, and who she is. She spoke of being 'only a companion,' rather scornfully; but she does not give me the idea of being rich herself. Perhaps Mrs. Grey is her sister, and they have lost all their money. Perhaps she is a governess. Bah! I might go on guessing all day, and never come near the truth. I will ask her plainly and frankly next time I see her; and meanwhile, even if I have been hasty in rushing into an acquaintance with a person I know nothing about, and who mayn't be in our set at all, still it can't do any harm so long as she doesn't visit us, and I don't bring the others into it. I must be very careful in what I say, for she is so lovely that I am sure Dick would fall in love with her if he were to see her; and then mamma might be angry with me."

Acting on which wise resolution, Kate merely answered to Madge's queries as to what had kept her so long, by saying she had been talking to a poor sick woman at a farm, and changed the conversation. The young lady was not fond of prevarication as a rule; it made her face burn.

In the meanwhile Mrs. Grey (for presupposing that I have no idiots among my readers, I see no use in keeping up a mystery as to the identity of that lady with the lodger at the farm before them) was battling with her

conscience certain doubts which the interview with Kate had evoked. Thanks to Lady Vanborough's volubility of speech, Miss Bellew had told her very little that she did not know before, but that little was of use to her, even as confirming Lady Vanborough; and being of use to her, she, as an honorable woman, felt annoyed with herself for having obtained it by a deception.

We are apt to say that women have no ideas of honor. I disagree with that theory *in toto*. Their perceptions on that subject, as on most others, are equally keen and far more subtle than the generality of ours. The only thing is that, being weaker than men, they sometimes lack force of character enough to carry out these perceptions. This is a broad statement, and requires explanation. Being informed by my editor, however, that space is valuable, and explanations are—not, I leave them to be worked out by yourself, and proceed.

"I am afraid it was not fair," thought Mrs. Grey; "and yet if I had said to her, 'I am Mrs. Grey,' she might have said just what she did, or even more. Besides, would that have been any truer than what I did say? Because I have been obliged to take a name which is not my own, am I bound to keep to it? Why, even if she had recognized me (and when she saw me I cannot fancy) and had addressed me as Mrs. Grey, I should have kept more strictly to the literal truth by saying, 'That is not my name,' than by assenting to it. I am not to be judged as other women—I, whose whole life is a martyrdom to the villainy of one man, and my own vain efforts to walk straightly away from, and in spite of, him. And to think that I was once as happy and innocent as that pretty, talkative child! My God help me! for at times my cross seems heavier than I can carry of my own strength. There seems to be a fate against me of late, since go where I may I cannot be left alone, or spared the notice of those very people whom I would most avoid."

And then she covered up her face with her hands and broke into silent, sorrowful weeping. A strong woman, but broken both in mind and health now by troubles

which, however they might be her own bringing in the beginning, were in very truth too heavy for one so gentle-minded and gently reared to bear alone.

Clive's last speech had indeed been a fearful shock to her. She had reasons, great and grave ones, for keeping her past life a sealed book to those among whom she had settled herself in the present one. She would fain have buried and blotted it out altogether, since even to think of it revived such a poignancy of anguish, such an agony of shame, as nearly broke her heart again. And now to find that the man whose obstinate love for her had become more a persecution than anything else, had carried his search for her so far as to obtain a clue, God knew how strong or how slight, to that very past from which she had escaped, brought down the long-hoarded strength and courage at a blow, and for a few hours left her too crushed and helpless even for tears. On that day when she last saw him she sat in her own room with her hands clasped on her knees, and her blank unseeing eyes fixed on vacancy, till the setting sun, shining full upon her white face through the lower panes of her window, roused her to the consciousness of the duties she had neglected, the suffering she had to encounter. The duties had to be remembered first; and rising to her feet with tottering limbs she rang the bell, and desired the maid who answered it to apologize to Lady Vanborough for her long absence, but that she was suffering from such a terrible headache that she had been quite unable to come down.

"Tell Mrs. Grey I don't want her," said Lady Vanborough in answer. "Take her up a cup of strong tea at once, and tell her not to show herself till her headache is quite gone;" and then the baronet's widow laughed to herself, and told herself—which was true—that she was a very good-natured creature. "Some lovers' quarrel, of course. Perhaps Master Clive is jealous—he looks as if he could be—and the silly woman has been crying her eyes out. Fancy a woman older than myself, if anything, and such a fool! Why, I couldn't squeeze out a tear for such a small matter as the best man ever born, to save my life. I'm sure they're not worth it; and that's why

they always ill-use the woman who makes most fuss about them. I must go up and scold the silly creature before she has time to stiffen up into propriety again."

And accordingly, while Mrs. Grey, having drunk her tea, was trying painfully, with throbbing brain and aching heart, to think what she should do to preserve her secret—whether she should trust to Clive's impartial friendship and, owning that there was something hidden, implore him to persuade his brother not to pursue his discoveries; or whether she should rely on Philip's wounded pride, and simply write him the letter Bernard had suggested—Lady Vanborough came into the room, told her that she looked like a death's head, and that she was an absurd goose to make herself miserable about nothing, and accused her of having quarreled with her lover.

"My—I do not understand you, Lady Vanborough," Mrs. Grey said, a look of mild offense upon her face.

"Yes, my dear, you do," answered her employer, turning her back to the fire, gentleman-fashion, and putting her hands under her tunic in default of coat-tails; "here's Bernard Clive desperately in love with you, and as proud as a peacock; and here are you, I haven't the least doubt, desperately in love with him, and prouder than any peahen that ever laid an egg—which, by the way, isn't saying much, for I've always thought peahens rather tame-spirited creatures than otherwise. Now, I don't know what you've been quarreling about; but I suppose he wants to get married—and very natural too. A sensible, rising young man like he is wants a wife, and I don't see, if he can keep her, why he shouldn't have her. What's the good of shilly-shallying? You'll have to give in sooner or later; and if you care for him, I'd advise you to do it sooner. I know there are plenty of wishy-washy sort of men who wouldn't know what to do with their own wills if they were let have 'em, and who *want* to be ridden with a curb; but Clive's not one of that sort. He's gone out of the house in a boiling passion now; and let me tell you, my dear, that if you take it out of some men before marriage, they'll take it out of you afterwards."

"But I am not going to be married to Mr. Clive," said Mrs. Grey, her pale face flushing painfully. "He has been a most kind friend to me, and I like and respect him; but I would no more marry him than you would."

"He never paid me the compliment of asking me," said Lady Vanborough, drily.

"Nor me," added Mrs. Grey. "Will you believe me, Lady Vanborough, when I assure you such an idea has never crossed my mind? Even when you have jested about Mr. Clive at times, I paid no attention, thinking it was only your—"

"Flippant manner of speech," suggested her ladyship, as Mrs. Grey hesitated. "Complimentary to me, eh? Of course I believe you, since you say so, though I shouldn't have thought you so dense; but now you do know it—"

"I think you are mistaken."

"What! when I got it from him before ever I saw you?" (It is worthy of mention that Lady Vanborough fully believed that she had. Her imagination was vivid, and by the time she had put it into words five or six times she began to believe in it as a reality.) She added in the same manner, "Why, the only wonder to me is, you didn't know it. It was only the other day some friend of his—who was it? Oh, Kate Bellew, to be sure—was talking about it to me. If that is all your fear, put it aside. Do you suppose people run after and devote themselves to women who can't make them any return, as he does with you, unless they're in love with them? Bah! my dear, the world's not so unselfish as all that, and you ought to know it as well as I."

Mrs. Grey said nothing for a minute. Her head was whirling, her pulse beating in quick, feverish throbs under this accumulation of trouble on trouble and perplexity on perplexity. When she did look up, it was to say in a tone of patient despair:

"If this be true, I have lost my best friend. Lady Vanborough, you have opened my eyes: will you let me leave you? Had I known this, I should never have

taken this situation. Knowing it, I should be wrong in keeping it."

"That's nonsense," said her ladyship. "You can't help the men falling in love with you, unless you cut off your nose, like the nuns of Coldinghame. If you're determined not to marry the man, tell him so, and have done with it."

But Mrs. Grey shook her head.

"It would not be right," she repeated; and then she went up to Lady Vanborough, both hands outstretched in sorrowful appeal.

"Oh, Lady Vanborough, let me go!" she said, earnestly. "You are a kind-hearted woman: feel for me, who am a woman also, though a most unhappy one. I should never have come here as your companion. I am not fit for it. Let me go away now, before you tell me so yourself."

"Look here," said Lady Vanborough. A new idea had flashed across her mind, and brought a heavy frown across her kindly face. Her hands left their gentlemanly pose, and took the other widow's in a firm grasp. "Tell me the truth. A woman is not to be utterly condemned because she is under a cloud. *Have you any right to the title of Mrs. Grey?*"

And Mrs. Grey made no answer; but the face a moment back flushed in appeal faded into a dead whiteness, and the hands Lady Vanborough held had turned as cold and damp as stone. With one keen look at her, her ladyship let them go, and turned away.

"I will not keep you against your will," she said, "nor will I turn you adrift. To-morrow I am going away on a fortnight's visit to some friends in Kent. You can either stay here, or go to your friends—as you like; and when I return, if you like to tell me your story, I will do my best to help you as a friend can."

CHAPTER XXI.

KATE TAKES OFFENSE.

AT about six o'clock on the day he was expected, Clive arrived at Bloom Cottage, and received a very cordial welcome from Dick, and a sufficiently friendly one from Dick's sister. He looked tired, and had that pale, over-worked expression which people luxuriating in country air and exercise recognize at once, and which woke a feeling of pity in Kate's kindly little heart.

"I am sorry I said anything against him," she thought to herself, with a quick remorseful twinge. "Poor fellow! he looks quite ill; and mamma is always so kind and cordial to him. I must take her place, and try to keep him good-tempered. I dare say he won't quarrel if I am careful to avoid occasions."

He certainly did not seem inclined to do so. There was a sort of languor about him, which appeared to dispose him to rest gratefully in the kindly welcome and homely chit-chat which surrounded him at the cottage. Kate quite wondered when she saw his eyes following her about the room, with almost as pleased and pleasant an expression as shone so often in Dallas M'Kenzie's. She had not thought those hard blue eyes could look so soft; and then her mind went back to Bee Vanborough's story; and the young heart, just sufficiently touched itself to feel for others' romances, melted still more.

"Why does not that Mrs. Grey marry him?" Kate asked herself, with a little indignation. "Bee must know better than that relation living at a distance; and if she

does like him, it is her duty to say so instead of holding back and playing with him. A woman has no right to use her beauty to give pain; and I would just like to tell her so," added the younger beauty, with an energetic pat of Dottie's golden mane, as she lifted that small lady into her chair for dinner. She never guessed that Clive's gaze rested on her in genuine pleasure and admiration, untouched by any thought of other women. In town he did often find fault with her; and in his eagerness to see her perfect, according to his ideas of perfection, quarreled with her for the thousand and one little imperfections which made her so irresistibly charming; but to-day she *was* perfect, even in his eyes. To-day, watching her as she flitted about in her simple linen dress, with the sunlight on her pretty hair—now seeing after the preparations for their homely meal, and making most ludicrous mistakes in the directions thereof; now tying up Madge's wind-loosened locks; and now stooping to tease and fondle her tiny sister—she became, as it were, the very embodiment of his own ideal of womanhood, the home sunbeam, and bright ministering spirit, unspoiled by tarnish of falsity or worldliness, which more men than Bernard Clive have yearned for in their inmost spirit.

Kate considered herself "frightfully sunburned," and was rather uneasy as to whether Dick might not think she should have dressed for dinner in honor of his friend; but to Clive the slight tinge of brown on brow and cheek harmonized like the mellow glow of sunlight with the dancing eyes and rich-colored masses of wavy hair; and as to the dress— Well, now I think of it, it is really a little hard and disheartening for our lasses, that let them dress their finest, stuff out their hair over innumerable pads and rolls, and deck their pretty figures in yards and yards of satin, or pyramids of frills and flounces, the very men for whom they take all this trouble never *will* think them looking so well as in a clean cotton gown—never will fancy any shape of the head so beautiful as that Nature has made for it. It is disheartening; but oh! young ladies, it is a most tender and subtle compliment to your own persons. The men may be fools, but they prefer

you to your clothes—*voilà tout!* I dare say Eve's second figleaf petticoat was better made than the first. Perhaps she combined shades of green in the third, and tried the effect of a tendril here and a blossom there; but I doubt whether Adam thought her any more beautiful than when, fresh from the hand of God, she rose before him on that first spring morning in Paradise!

This is a digression. Excuse it, and allow me to continue.

The evening passed very pleasantly. No business was talked of after all; Clive even declining, on plea of fatigue, to go out for a smoke with his friend Dick: and at eight o'clock they were still sitting near the uncurtained window, Kate busy with her crochet, and Clive telling her something about Lady Margaret, who seemed to have been using him as a sort of adopted son during their absence, when a gentleman passed along the beach below them; and seeing, by the glow of lamp and firelight, Kate's white dress at the window, lifted his hat. Kate did not see him—she was looking at Clive: but she fairly started, *his* face turned so dark with angry surprise.

"Dick!" he cried, sharply, and stooping forward, "look there! Isn't that that Canadian fellow—M'Kenzie? What business on earth has he down here?"

It was merely a hasty exclamation, somewhat imperiously uttered; but it fell like a bomb-shell into the little family circle, a moment back so happy and peaceful; and Kate's face glowed in an instant with the deepest indignation, while George, who had been lying on the floor, trying to touch his forehead with the tips of his toes, as suddenly writhed into a kneeling position, with cheeks distended and eyes glaring with wrath. Dick did not answer for a second; but his sister saved him the trouble by drawing herself as erect as if she had literally and indeed swallowed the proverbial poker; and, turning upon the visitor with her customary promptitude:

"Yes, Mr. Clive—that is Mr. M'Kenzie," she said, her clear tones resonant of unuttered defiance. "Why should not he have business here as well as other people? Surely he has a right to come and go where he likes without—"

And here Kate began to remember the obligations of courtesy, and checked herself, swelling, like a ridiculous young turkey-cock, with the words she longed to have added.

Clive raised his eyebrows. To speak the truth, he had been as much startled by the effect of his words as his audience by the words themselves. M'Kenzie's appearance had surprised and annoyed him; and he spoke on the impulse of the moment, forgetting that Kate was present; but to have his words taken up by her, and flung back to him with such indignant warmth, was a sign to him that he had more warrant for annoyance than he supposed. It was like a gust of hail in your face on a warm summer's day—like a throb of sharp pain shooting across a healthy limb; and yet he did not feel as angry with the actual hand which dealt it as with the ideal Kate, who had once again disappointed him. He punished her by that look of calm astonishment before turning to Dick with:

"What has brought him down here, did you say, Bellew?"

"George, and the bother he gave, I believe," said Dick, trying to laugh, but looking rather embarrassed; while poor little Kate sat nearly petrified with angry wonder at being thus ignored. "He took George in, you know, when we came down here; and—"

"Took him in! No, I didn't know," said Clive, looking more disturbed than before. "What did he do that for? I thought you were all together down here."

"Really, Mr. Clive," cried Kate, unable to hold her tongue, however undignified speech might be, "I don't mean to be rude, but I think you can't be aware how funny your speeches sound. Surely you do not expect us—"

"Now, Kittie, be quiet," put in Dick, "or Clive will think I've not been taking proper care of you. He doesn't know as well as I what a volcano you are, always ready to go off with a fizz about nothing—nothing at all," added the brother, nodding his head at Bernard as if to apologize for Kate, or assure him that there was no special cause for her championship of the absent Canadian.

"Well, Dick, you needn't call Mr. M'Kenzie 'nothing,'" cried George, coming to his sister's side. "I'm sure he's a regular trump. He came down here on purpose to please me. I believe he'd do anything for me; and he's rowed Kate out three times, and carried Dottie out walking when she was tired, and read aloud those jolly Ingol—what's-its-name's legends all yesterday evening. Didn't he, Katie? You know the book I mean—about the devil who 'dragged his nerveless tail all along of the Red Sea shore;' and *we* all like him immensely—better than any one else we know. You said so to-day, didn't you, Kate?"

"A happy man," said Clive, with a curl of his lip, which brought the red blood burning into Kate's cheek. "Well, I think I must be saying good night. Dick, will you smoke your cigar as far as the inn with me?"

This of course meant, "Dick, will you come out and discuss this intruder where we can't be interrupted by Miss Bellew and George;" but though Kate so understood it, she could offer no remonstrance, and merely clenched her little hands together in impotent vexation, while Dick went to look for his overcoat.

Clive hesitated. He was quite aware that he had angered Kate, and that he was going to do so still more. It was his own fault; and yet it was for her sake, and to save her from pain; only no one but he knew that; and though he piqued himself on not "spoiling her like the rest of the world," he could not but feel to the very core the change from the bright soft cordiality of a few minutes back to the present wrathful coldness. With a wistful, almost pleading look in his eyes, he leaned forward to Kate.

"Don't be angry with me, Miss Bellew. I was sorry to find Mr. M'Kenzie established here, because I don't think him a very desirable friend for you; but I had no intention of saying so when I first spoke, and less still of offending you."

"Offending me!" repeated Kate, too angry to see the appeal in Clive's eyes, and still further irritated by the unfortunate words; "you have only a little surprised me,

Mr. Clive. I thought men were incapable of small jealousies, and also that ladies with mothers and brothers to take care of them were not expected to consult their young men acquaintances as to who were desirable friends for them."

Clive was silent for a moment.

"That is a most crushing reprimand," he said, very slowly and quietly; "but provided that the mother is far away, and the young man acquaintance (not such a very young man either, Miss Bellew) finds the lady in perfect innocence adopting as a friend a woman of doubtful character, or a man of undesirable antecedents, I think most people would absolve him of officious interference were he to give her brother a word of warning on the subject."

"Which is what you would do in such a case, I suppose," said Kate, half incredulously.

"Which is what I would do in such a case—yes," answered Clive, coolly.

"And on the sole conjecture that, because you have seen Mr. M'Kenzie on the beach, Madge and I must have adopted him as an intimate friend? Mind," added Kate, stoutly, "I do not say we have not."

"I am glad you don't. Thank God, you are as yet as candid as you are imprudent and unkind," cried Clive, losing self-control for one moment in ungovernable pain; and then he turned sharply away, and went out just as Dick called from the cottage door to know why he was delaying.

Madge and George had taken themselves off in disgust; but as soon as Clive was gone they returned, to find their eldest sister staring out of the window at the broad expanse of moonlit silvery sea, and giving vent every now and then to a suspicious little sniffle.

"Why, Kittie, you're crying!" cried Madge, taking a look at her. "What's the matter? Has Mr. Clive been vexing you? Why, your face is as red as fire, and your nose is all swelled—isn't it, George? Do look at Kate's nose. What is the matter?"

"I wish you would look at one another's noses," said

Kate, petulantly. "Nothing is the matter, and Mr. Clive is always vexing me and every one else; I never yet met such a disagreeable person."

"I like Bernard Clive generally," said George, with the ponderous gravity of a judge—"at least I used to did; but I should just have liked to have punched his head jolly well just now. Calling Dallas M'Kenzie a 'fellow' indeed! I should like to know what *he* is! I say, Kate, I'm hungry."

"Hungry! just at your bed-time!" cried Kate, rallying herself, and rather ashamed of having betrayed her feelings before the children. "It's half-past nine; and to-morrow's Sunday. Now, George, I won't have you going to the cupboard. There's only just cake enough for to-morrow, and they won't bake another till Monday."

"Then they're pigs—that's what they are. Only a little bit, Katie, there's a darling angel! Just look what a cavity there is here"—clasping his hands pathetically on his stomach—"I shall go into a consumption before we go home."

"A consumption of food, I suppose," said Kate, satirically. "Oh! yes, I'm always a darling angel when you want to get anything out of me. And as to the cavity, that's a cram, sir, for your heart is all there and nowhere else."

"I wish it was a cram," grumbled George, "then I shouldn't feel so empty. Aren't *you* hungry, Madge?"

Madge nodded, and observed in a modest aside that there was plenty of the currant tart left. "You gave such little company bits at dinner, Kate."

"Why didn't you ask for more, then?" asked Kate, sighing but yielding, and reaching her hand to the bell.

"Because Mr. Clive said you must be tired of helping so many. How I do hate people to say that when one hasn't had half enough! I say, Katie, do you remember Eve thought he would want to marry you when he first came!"

"Yes, I remember," said Kate, giving her head a toss of disdain at the idea. "Eve was out in her guess."

"Oh, gracious! I hope you won't," cried George, looking up from his plate of pie. "Look here, Kittie, why don't you marry M'Kenzie? He's ever such a much better fellow; and then I'd come and live with you, and he could teach me to swim; and it's much jollier doing my Latin with him than with old Smith."

"What a goose you are, George!" said Madge, while Kate grew rosy-red and bit her lips. "As if Kate would have you to live with her if she was married! Nurse says it's a great mistake to go and live with young married people; for they never like being advised, and when they have babies—"

"Madge, I do wish you wouldn't talk such nonsense," cried poor Kate, in desperation. "How would you like any one to hear you? Now, have you both finished?"

"But, Kate, it is not all nonsense," persisted Madge, clearing the juice out of her plate with laborious care. "Mr. M'Kenzie does like you. I asked him, and he said so; and I asked him if you were not much nicer than Miss Marryatt, and he said you were nicer than any girl he'd ever met; so why shouldn't you get married?"

"Ah! why shouldn't you? There now!" added George, with clinching severity.

Kate took him by the shoulders and gave him a little shake.

"I wish you would go to bed, both of you," she said, half laughing, half crying. "I never saw such a couple of children for talking of what you don't understand. 'Get married' indeed!"—repeating Madge's phrase with vast scorn—"I suppose you think I am bound to marry every one who likes me; and that I have nothing to do but to order anybody I like to marry me. If that is the sort of way you talk to Mr. M'Kenzie, I shall not let you be with him."

"I'm going back to London with him, so you can't stop me," sang George, turning a summersault before making a bolt upstairs to his bed-room; and Madge followed, after asking Kate if she were coming too.

"No," said Kate, "I am going to sit up for Dick, and

tack the clean frills into your jacket. Martin has been too busy to do it."

Kate might intend to sit up for Dick; but as that young gentleman stayed out till past two in the morning, and she was already tired by a five miles' walk that day, her endurance was not equal to her intentions; wherefore, after a couple of hours of very lonely and unhappy expectation (Kate was never a lover of solitude), she betook herself to bed, making up her mind to be down early and ask Dick what Mr. Clive had said the first thing in the morning. What could he have to say against Mr. M'Kenzie, a man so gentle-mannered, quiet, and intellectual—a gentleman older than himself, and equally well-born? Why, it was preposterous! it was a miserable jealousy and love of detraction. Kate almost hated Bernard Clive at the moment; and yet she did not quite believe him to be what her accusations involved. It must be only his dislike to herself which made him set himself against the friends she cared for. "And yet, why should he dislike me so much?" thought Kate. "I have never done anything to him. I would have even been friends with him if he would have let me; but he won't. He makes me rude and passionate whenever I see him; and when I am feeling quite sorry for him, and kind, he snubs me and speaks as if— Oh, I can't bear him; and I almost hope Bee's beautiful Mrs. Grey won't marry him; for I am sure he would make her utterly miserable."

With which charitable conclusion Kate fell asleep, and was not even disturbed by the sound of Dick's coming upstairs, and banging to his bed-room door with his usual thoughtlessness, at the unholy hour aforementioned.

She had forgotten in her arrangements for the morrow that, however early she might be down, Dick was by no means certain to follow her example; more especially as the day was Sunday, and he had been in bed so late the night before. As it turned out he did not even get up for church, but had his breakfast sent upstairs to him; and George, who had been over to the inn bright and early, reported that he had seen nothing at all of Clive, but that Mr. M'Kenzie had said he had had a very stupid day

away from them all, and had sent Kate a cluster of roses from his friend's greenhouse.

Those roses did Kate good. It was not like her to "let the sun go down on her wrath," and to warm it up with the morning orb was well nigh impossible. The bitterness of Clive's words faded with the night, and the heat of her own humiliated her. After all, he was a lawyer, a cold, hard man; but he might have meant well. Perhaps Mr. M'Kenzie had offended him once on a time; or perhaps had some discreditable relatives whom Clive (being, as she knew, terribly proud and stand-alooft) could not dissociate from himself.

"He might not have said anything if I had not been so touchy," Kate thought, with mortified candor; "and then I dare say I irritated him to say more than he meant. No one could really dislike Mr. M'Kenzie who knew him; but they are so utterly unlike, it would be difficult for them to get on well. I must manage to bring them together and make them like one another. But oh, how provoking not to be able to see Dick before going to church! Mr. Clive must have had a great deal to say to keep him out so late: but what a shame to say anything against Dallas M'Kenzie when he is so good and kind, and so different from other men!" and Kate fell to sniffing her roses with a second little glow of gentle indignation.

She was wrong. Clive and Dick had found a good deal to say to one another, but it was not about Mr. M'Kenzie. It is a common mistake in humanity to imagine that whatever is deeply interesting to us must as deeply interest other people. Kate was thinking a great deal about Dallas M'Kenzie at present; and therefore, like a little fool, she fancied everybody else's mind must be similarly occupied. They were not, however; for Clive was thinking too much of Kate herself to trouble himself about M'Kenzie, except in conjunction with her; and as for Dick, he, like Kate, was so taken up with his own less innocent and more complicated affairs, that he imagined Clive's visit must have reference to them alone, and was impatient to get out of doors to discuss them with him. His first question, as they turned into the village street, was an eager:

"Well, old fellow, and what about that girl?"

The only "girl" occupying Clive's mind at that moment was Kate. He was just thinking how pretty she looked even when she was angry, and wondering within himself whether he should judge her wrath as harshly as he had done if it had been evoked in his defense, not Mr. M'Kenzie's. He started when Dick spoke, and repeated "Girl?" half vaguely.

"Yes, you know whom I mean," replied Dick, impatiently. "Fanny Greypole, *my* young woman, and be hanged to her! Have you seen her again?"

CHAPTER XXII.

DICK'S LOVE AFFAIR.

CLIVE turned round, roused from his own thoughts in an instant, and putting them away, as was customary with him, answered promptly:

"Yes, I have. And now, Dick, what do you mean to do about her?"

Dick shuffled and swore. Poor fellow! it was not to be wondered at that he so often sought refuge in strong language, for there was nothing else strong about him—not even his passions. His very viciousness was so weak, that if the power of resisting it had not been weaker still, he might have been a most innocuous member of society. Unfortunately, however, the negative qualities permissible in a woman are not sufficient for the lords of creation. It is *possible* for her to pass through life without a single noble thought—a single virtuous or unselfish action—and yet neither be guilty of positive hurt to herself or those around her; but in man an utter impotence for good implies in itself a certain potency for evil, both to himself and those connected with him. Dick's career was a proof thereof.

"You will have to do something, I am afraid," said Clive, quietly. "She evidently considers you as engaged to her; and as she has lost a good match on your account, the mother is as evidently determined not to let you get off scathless."

Dick swore again, alluding to Mrs. Greypole in terms which, had that good lady overheard, she might have

been tempted to carry into application by proving that her "bark was worse than her bite."

"Did she tell you all about it?" he asked, when he had finished his litany of (im)pious invocations.

"No. The mother wished to do so; but I declined to hear it. I should have thought you might have known that. When you tell me your affairs, I am willing to listen to them; not otherwise."

"You're such a cursedly honorable fellow," said Dick. "I thought you lawyers liked to get at every man's secrets."

"Even our friends?" inquired Clive, calmly.

"Oh, hang it all! I'm not so deucedly scrupulous as all that. If I could catch you tripping—By Jove! what fun it would be! But, I say, let's go up to your room, and I'll tell you the whole secret. I don't want all the world to be overhearing us."

They had reached the door of the inn, and were looking down the steep narrow street, with the moonbeams glittering on every point and inequality in the rough pavement, and sleeping in a broad splash of silver on the waters of the cove beneath. Heavy masses of black cloud were moving slowly across the dark blue sky, and had thrown a dark band of shadow athwart the middle distance of the scarcely breathing sea; but beyond that again lay a thin streak of white, in the centre of which floated a tiny barque, every spar, block, and rope of which seemed to have been fashioned out of frosted silver by a fairy shipwright. Here and there a faint twinkle of light just reddened the window of some cottage whose habitants were more wakeful than the rest; and in some distant yard a dog was barking at intervals in a short jerking way, as if it wanted to get free; but otherwise all was very still—very silent; and the two young men in their well-cut clothes, and with their fair gentlemanly faces, looked strangely out of keeping with the primitive rusticity of the scene around, and the quaint old-fashioned porch, with its peaked roof and red-tiled floor, of the old hostelry behind them.

Clive turned into it without a word. How could he

help feeling distrustful and suspicious of human nature, when even among his friends he saw specimens such as this? He was not a particularly religious man, but he did try to do right according to the broad and simple canons of morality; and then he felt sickened and indignant because other men cast them aside altogether, and yet went to church and sang out of the same hymn-books with pure and gentle women, and were spoken of as rather shining lights and objects of admiration than otherwise.

"But, after all, what are the women themselves?" thought Clive, thinking of his own experiences as a lawyer, and of the "behind-scene" glimpses to which his sister Harriet had treated him.

They were just passing an open door in the little whitewashed, raftered passage leading to Clive's room; and in the act of stooping to put his boots outside, his handsome features clearly relieved against the square of light behind, stood Dallas M'Kenzie.

"Ah, Bellew! Good evening. How are you all up at the cottage?" he said, in his bright genial way; and then, as his eye fell on Clive, he bowed, adding more coldly, "Mr. Clive, I suppose. I heard you were expected to-day."

"Yes—I have been promising my friend Lady Margaret and her son here to run down every day this week," Clive answered as stiffly, and not sorry to show that his visit was not without due authority. "But I am surprised to meet *you*. What can have made you leave town just as the people are coming back to it?"

"Partly from a whim, partly as nurse," M'Kenzie answered, laughing. "The season and its votaries are not such potent charmers for me as for you young Londoners. Good night."

And then he went inside, and the two young men passed on.

"Do you like him?" Clive asked. "I suppose, since you are so intimate, you do."

"Oh, yes—pretty well. He's more a woman's man than one of *us*, you know—always looking after the

girls and playing with Dottie, and that sort of thing. Rather he than I, say I, where children are concerned; but I expect he got deucedly tired of Master George, and came down here in the hope of getting rid of him."

Clive sneered slightly. His opinion of Dick's penetration was below mediocrity.

"Do you know anything about him and his antecedents?" he asked.

"I know he belongs to the M'Kenzies of Glen Ruthie, and was in the Royal Engineers till he sold out. You met him in America, didn't you? so you ought to know more of him than I do. What was he up to then? and is there anything against him?"

Clive hesitated. He did know more of Dallas M'Kenzie, and much that was against him in his own opinion, and still more against his forming an intimacy with the Miss Bellevs, and perhaps (it was a horrible idea; but George had suggested, and Kate's blushes confirmed it) winning the affections of the eldest girl. Five minutes ago he had been prompt to speak his knowledge, and warn Dick against encouraging a friendship with the Canadian; but during those five minutes a multitude of considerations had occurred to his mind, and stayed him in the very act of speaking. These reports so prejudicial to M'Kenzie, how had he heard them? In a lawyer's office among lawyers, and therefore to be considered as in some sort confidential; and jested about in idle gossip at the bar of an American hotel! Again, might they not have been incorrectly stated; and therefore, if hastily repeated, to be upset as unworthy of credence, however well founded at bottom? Again, was his motive pure from beginning to end in thus raking them up again to the man's disadvantage, and when the latter was leading a life honorable and respected among his fellow-men?

These were three important questions.

To solve them in three seconds was impossible. Only this was clear to him. Until he could feel implicit confidence in himself, he ought not to ask Dick to put confidence in him, especially to the detriment of a third person.

"I do not know much of him," he said, slowly. "I met him once or twice only. He had just returned from Mexico then; and there were some unpleasant rumors about him and a Canadian lady. It is possible, however, that they were unfounded. Go on with what you were telling me about yourself first. M'Kenzie will keep."

Dick obeyed, nothing loth. He always preferred the subject of himself to that of other people; and if there were anything shady against M'Kenzie, it would be easy to drop him any day. Of that gentleman's feelings, or of Kate's, or of the possibility of such feelings being connected with one another, Dick never thought: it was not his way. Leaning both elbows on the table, and filling himself a stiffish glass of brandy and water, he went full tilt into his own troubles as linked with the fascinations of Miss Greypole.

Shall I give you the story in his words? I think not: it might be less wearisome in mine.

Fanny Greypole was the daughter of a well-to-do grocer and churchwarden, and had been early sent to a "college for young ladies," and taught to play the piano and speak French, until Mr. Greypole's sudden failure and death brought her home to a new order of things, and a less pleasant one than the old. Fortunately the widow was a woman of energy. She at once gave up her house, sold the fixtures, and taking a less expensive residence, put an advertisement in the daily papers of "board and lodging for a respectable single man of good position, or two brothers."

"Fanny must be married off quick," said Mrs. Greypole, "and married respectable. There's nothing like boarders for falling in love; and 'taint easy to play the fool with a young woman when her mother's got you both under her own nose."

Good reasoning! Unfortunately, however, Fanny did not remain under her mother's nose as desired; and it avails little having a right theory if the practice be not in unison with it. Fanny was a rather superior, very pretty, and very self-willed girl. The first boarder, an unexceptionally respectable young man, fell in love with her at

once; Fanny fell out with him on some trifle or another; Mrs. Greypole took the lover's part; and Fanny—took herself away. She went to Lady Caroline Beaumont at Daulish Park, the grand lady of the neighborhood, and with whose house she had got well acquainted in her childhood, during visits paid to her aunt, who had been for thirty years Lady Caroline's housekeeper; and she managed to establish herself there as part lady's-maid, part companion to the Hon. Miss Beaumont, a chronic invalid with a spinal complaint, which kept her a perpetual prisoner to the sofa, and not unfrequently to her room. For such a person something rather different from the ordinary h-dropping, idealess waiting-maid was really needful; and Fanny—who could read aloud and do hair with equal dash, who knew all sorts of songs, and could sing them in a very fair voice, who could make dresses, and chatter vivaciously—became quite a godsend to the poor sufferer, and was made so much of by her that the young woman found her situation, albeit twanging of the menial, infinitely more agreeable than a dingy back parlor, plenty of housework, and mother's scoldings, in the dingy street of a dingy country town.

It became still more agreeable after the arrival of Mr. Dick Bellew on a visit to Lady Caroline during one of his summer vacations.

Besides her attendance on the invalid, Fanny had the special charge of accompanying Master Alick Beaumont, a child of seven, too restless for the nursery and too small for school, in his rambles in the park; Lady Caroline having a well-founded suspicion that, if left to himself, he would immediately betake himself to make acquaintance with the new kicking horse in his father's stables, or the weeds at the bottom of the round pond. Dick went out one day to smoke a meditative cigar in the park also, met Miss Greypole and her charge—the former radiant in white piqué and pink ribbons, the latter gamboling in front—fell into conversation with her, was fascinated by her shy vivacity of speech, and fell headlong in love with her bright eyes and pretty face.

It was the work of ten minutes, but it was effectual.

Dick had no appetite for dinner that day; and next morning he put on a new tie, pinned a moss-rosebud in his button-hole, and sallied forth into the park at an earlier hour of the morning than generally had the honor of seeing him out of bed.

Fanny returned from her excursion that day with a pink rosebud in her belt; and Master Alick was seedy from an over-surfeit of sugar-plums, and didn't "remember anything" about his walk to amuse mamma with while she was dressing!

Dick had at first taken Miss Greypole for a visitor, in right of her smart clothes and white teeth and hands; and when he found that she was "only Isobel Beaumont's companion" (I am afraid Fanny said nothing about the hair-dressing or lady's-maid side of the matter) he merely gave fuller vent to his admiration, unchecked by dread of interference or cashiering from aristocratic father and mother. He meant nothing, of course, but to thoroughly enjoy himself, but he did mean that, and in laying himself out for that end, gave little thought to the character of the girl he had to deal with. In fact, the gentleman was too deeply in love just then to *think* much of anything, and made as great a fool of himself as young men of his ilk are in the habit of doing on such occasions. Now, Fanny was not in love at all. She had not even broken with the lodger at home, merely meaning to "bring him down a peg or two" by her absence, and assert her authority to rule once and for all by a severe exposition of the consequences of rebellion; but she was no less bent than her mother on making a "good" marriage; and being perfectly well acquainted with Dick's family and position, decided that he would make by far the better match of the two, and that to be Mrs. Bellew, and on visiting terms with the lady in whose service she was now living, was decidedly preferable to becoming the spouse of plain John Higginson, clerk in a wool-broker's office.

To this end she played her cards. I don't think I need enter into the particulars of the game. Those who have seen it played by a skillful hand require no descrip-

tion of moves equally hackneyed and efficacious; and for others I need simply remark that by a judicious use of her personal charms, and a judiciously alternated coldness, coquetry and yielding, Dick was not only brought to the pitch of a direct offer, but (greater triumph still) to confirm that offer in writing.

"Playing with you!" he wrote. when lashed to desperation by Fanny's coqueties—she having first worked him up little by little to a perfectly rampant state of affection; then, when he ardently pleaded for some return, having told him that he was only playing with her, and taking herself off immediately afterwards for two or three days, during which she declined to see him, and eluded all his efforts at an interview—"Playing with you! Oh, Fanny! how can you wrong my affection so cruelly? I swear to you that I love you as I have never loved any one before—that I adore you, and that I would rather have you for a wife than any girl living! For Heaven's sake, Fanny, have pity on me! Say you will love me, and I will sacrifice my whole life to you. What is life worth to me without you? You say I don't want you for a wife. My beautiful love, how could you utter those words so coldly, and go away without giving me time to deny them? Only say you *will* be my wife and my own, and I will be what I am now—yours unalterably and forever,—DICK BELLEW."

An uncommonly foolish letter to be written by a young man *not* in earnest; but, as you may perceive, poor Dick was too far gone by now to remember whether he were in earnest or no; and he not only sealed and sent it, but having on their subsequent interview been informed of Fanny's semi-engagement to the other gentleman, whom she introduced under the title of "a young wool-merchant," he flew into a regular lover's passion of jealousy, repeated all his offers more fervently than before, insisted on his rival's immediate dismissal, reiterated the whole scene in a passionate letter written that same evening; and, on Fanny's promising to obey him, and assuring him that she had no sentiment warmer than indifference for Mr. Higginson, presented her with a very pretty em-

erald ring (bought with his mother's money), and put it on Miss Greypole's finger in true lover's fashion, and in company with a shower of kisses. Then Fanny was satisfied, and became so sweet and amiable as to wind herself more closely into Dick's heart than before, though always keeping him on the tenter-hooks by rigidly adhering to that "respectability" which Clive had somehow recognized in her first appearance.

Also she did what neither Clive nor Dick would have suspected: she went straight to Miss Beaumont and told her in strictest confidence, and with childlike joy and bashfulness, that she was engaged to Mr. Bellew, Lady Caroline's guest. Miss Beaumont, in strictest confidence, and without any joy at all, told her mother; and Lady Caroline, very quietly, and without giving Dick an inkling of the real cause contrived to bring that young gentleman's visit to a speedy end.

Before even doing this, however, she, with a due regard to the hearts of her other male guests, told Miss Greypole that her daughter would be going abroad very shortly, and could therefore dispense with her services as companion. In vulgar terms, through Dick Bellew and her "engagement" with him, Miss Fanny "got the sack;" and that young lady, in writing to her lover, told him as much in very plain and rather pathetic language. Dick did not feel the pathos. In fact, it was not easy for him, poor fellow, to feel very much for even his best beloved when she was away from him. However, he wrote an affectionate letter full of protestations of endearment; and Fanny, who had grown very fond of the scapegrace after all, took it for more than it meant, and was content. The biter in this case, as in others, had been bitten.

They did not meet again for six months. Dick's letters had dropped off in ardor, and grown few by degrees and beautifully less. He had been through two or three flirtations or similar *délassements*, and was, indeed, in a fair way to forget the Greypole episode as though it had never been. Its heroine, however, was not so minded. Dick might mean to ignore the past, but Fanny determined to recall it. She said no word of complaint, even

to her fickle lover ; but after waiting patiently for a given time, wrote to an uncle at Oxford, a farmer with three handsome sons, that she was wanting change of air, and would come down, if he were willing, to try it at the farm.

Three days later, Dick, lounging up the "High" for his afternoon stroll, met the enchantress looking prettier than ever, bewitchingly attired, and accompanied by the handsomest of the three cousins. Needless to say the effect. Fanny had managed by tact as much as beauty, to pierce young Bellew's heart beneath the skin ; and the wound had only partially healed. It broke out afresh at the unexpected rencontre with the young woman who had inflicted it, was aggravated by a judiciously blended show of cheerfulness and indifference on her part, and festered by jealousy of the cousin, until Master Dick found himself more hopelessly in love than ever, and renewing all his vows, protestations, and promises, till, just when he was gliding to the very verge of a private marriage, the handsome cousin, suspecting that he was only being made a tool in the matter, proposed for himself—was refused—and Fanny had to leave the farm.

Of course, as soon as she and her witcheries were gone, Dick repented himself of his folly, and tried to drown the remembrance of it as speedily as possible, and in such a manner as to procure his rustication, and cover his mother with affliction. Indeed, the former brought with it this consoling reflection : "She'll be sure to forget all about me before the year is over, especially as she don't know where I am." Unfortunately, however, Fanny knew his home address as well as the college one ; and as Dick never wrote a letter without betraying something which he meant to hide, she managed to gather a pretty good idea of his doings and movements, until the sudden flight to Combe Regis baffled her just as she and her mother had determined to come up to London and insist on a fulfillment of the "engagement" which, since their last meeting, Dick had seemed entirely to ignore.

Such was the story of young Bellew's connection with Miss Greypole, not as told by Dick, but as deduced by

Clive from the rival accounts of man and maid, sifted and weighed according to the experience of a legal mind. When it was finished he said, drily :

"Well, Dick, as far as I can see you have made a consummate fool of yourself, and will have to pay for it."

"Why, you don't mean to say she'll bring an action about it, do you ?" asked Dick, miserably.

"That is just what I do mean to say, unless you settle it with her beforehand."

"What! Sue me for breach of— Oh! hang it all, old fellow; why, it would ruin me bag and baggage. You're out there. Fanny's a deuced deal too fond of me for that."

"Fanny is fond of you in a certain way; but she is fonder of herself, her good name, and well-being. She will not allow any of those to be damaged by maudlin sentimentality on her part, I assure you; and even if *she* were weak, her mother would be strong for her."

Dick again apostrophized Mrs. Greypole with the choicest hyperboles of endearment.

"I might just as well hang myself," he observed, dolefully.

"As marry Miss Greypole?"

"Gracious! No, that's out of the question of course. If she were only a lady I'd marry her to-morrow, that is if I'd any tin to keep her on; but as it is—"

"Marriage is, as you say, out of the question. Then Dick, let me advise you, as a friend, to tell Miss Greypole so plainly and honestly; show her that for your mother's and sisters' sake you have not a right to damage your social position, even if you would wish to do so. Speak to her frankly. Tell her you've behaved like a fool and a blackguard" ("Thank you," grumbled Dick) "and appeal to her generosity. If that doesn't answer, offer the mother what compensation you can; but for Heaven's sake keep it out of the police courts. That would be worse for your family than any *mésalliance*."

"Hang my family!" said Dick, peevishly. "It is *I* who am to be considered first, I think; but no one ever gives a thought to that. Hullo! it's getting on for two;

I must be off. One word though, Clive: I'll bet you three to one that, before I've said half the things you've been suggesting, I shall be on my knees begging Fanny to be mine at any price. There's something about that girl perfectly irresistible."

"Then give me your word not to see her again, except in the presence of myself or some cooler head than your own. Write to her; or if you must see her, let it be with a friend who can help you. Come, Dick, your promise on that."

"All right," said Dick; "I don't *want* to find myself spliced, I can assure you. Good night, old fellow; you shall write the letter for me," and then Mr. Bellew took himself away, without another word having been said on the subject of Dallas M'Kenzie.

Left alone, Clive gave his mind to the latter, and thought about him long and steadily. The great questions after all were—was that gentleman in love with Kate Bellew, and was he trying to make her in love with him? If so, and if those old stories about him were true, Clive felt that it was not right that the Belles should be left in ignorance of them; and that no scruples of delicacy would excuse his silence in their eyes, were it to be the cause of Kate's affections being irretrievably engaged. If, however, those accusations against him were either false or one-sided (as was possible), Clive's own sensitive honor told him that he could never excuse himself for having, no matter with what good intentions, slandered a man who he felt instinctively was his rival; and even if they *were* true, provided M'Kenzie had no intention of wooing or winning Katie Bellew, would it be fair or manly to rake them up now to his prejudice, when he was living a new life in a new country, and but for an accident might have left the past buried in general and entire oblivion? No, the more indignant Clive felt with Mr. M'Kenzie for having inserted himself into an intimacy with the Belles with that slur hanging over him, the more he felt that it was for any one rather than himself to betray him.

"I will wait," was his concluding thought, "wait and

see for myself whether my suspicions are correct ; and if I see anything to confirm them, I will go straight to M'Kenzie himself, tell him what I have heard against him, and give him the choice of disproving it, of breaking with the Bellews, or of no longer allowing them to remain in ignorance of his character. He is a gentleman and a man of honor in most matters ; and even if we have a row about it, I believe he will behave fairly and above-board, if treated in a like manner. I hate underhand work."

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE QUARREL BY THE SHORE.

FOR the first time in her life, Kate was suffering from an attack of real girlish embarrassment, at the idea of meeting a gentleman—two gentlemen, in fact; and during the process of putting on her bonnet for church, she wished very heartily that she could send the children without her, and copy Dick's example by staying at home.

"But if I were to let those dreadful children go without me," thought Kate, with a prophetic shiver, "Heaven only knows what worse things they would say to them. How I do wish boys were not so silly, and men so disagreeable, putting such nonsense into one's head! I only hope they will both have overslept themselves, like Dick."

And then the first chimes of the bell began, and Kate had to hurry downstairs, and see George's fingers into his gloves, and help Madge in a frantic search for her prayer-book before they started.

I don't know whether it was the rapid walk up-hill, or the confusion of seeing her last hope unverified, but certainly Kate's cheeks were glowing, and she had never looked lovelier in her life than when she came into view of the two gentlemen waiting in the churchyard for her arrival. Clive was nearest; but he was apparently engaged in contemplating the view from the hill, while M'Kenzie, who stood on the church steps, was palpably and unaffectedly looking out for nothing but the party

from the cottage ; and as Kate's eyes, passing Clive, met his, and saw the brightening recognition in them, over all her face, and even over the little shell-like ears and round throat, there stole a tender, exquisite blush, vivid and delicate as that in the heart of a moss-rosebud—the virginal banner of submission, and as such read only too accurately by the man of whose nearer presence she was as yet unconscious. In that fleeting blush, that almost imperceptible droop of the proud little head and saucy eyes, Clive learned that his last night's suspicions were correct. Kate's heart had yielded to a master's touch, and that master was Dallas M'Kenzie. More—in the way in which her gaze, while going to his rival as a bird to its nest, passed *him* without even a flicker of recognition, he learned her entire indifference to himself, and the hitherto unguessed-at strength of his own passion for her. It was only a moment, and yet long enough to teach a man three lessons bitter enough to rankle through a lifetime—lessons which, if they had only been remembered and acted on, might have saved him many an hour of after-pain, without increasing the poignancy of this.

He knew before that he cared for her—that, unlike his ideal as she was, she had yet grown dear to him in a way which no ideal could ever be ; but that he loved her like *this* !—that a fleeting blush on her cheek should pierce his heart with an anguish sharper than any knife, and make every vein in his body thrill with a fierce jealousy and anger against the other man, now crossing the path to take her hand in easy, cordial welcome—that was a revelation sadder and more overwhelming than even that which was given to the Israelitish king of old to whom it was written, "This night shall thy soul be required of thee."

Clive was a proud man, and no sign of what was passing in his soul showed in the hard, stern lines of his face, as, disdaining to press his prior claim of friendship where it was not recognized, he moved aside at once to give M'Kenzie precedence, and would indeed have merely greeted his friends with a bow before passing on into the church ; but Kate had seen him by now, and remembering her good resolutions, she took her hand from M'Ken-

zie, stretching it out to the young barrister with a smile more cruel in its sweetness than her previous ignoring.

"Aren't you ashamed of yourself?" she said, looking up in his face with laughing eyes, which swept the bitterness from his heart like breath from a glass; "keeping my brother out till two o'clock this morning, and preventing his getting up for church, as a good Christian should! We don't allow of such hours in Combe Regis, Mr. Clive, and I am very angry. I wonder you are up yourself this morning."

"But, you see, I am so fond of the country, I don't like to waste more minutes of it in sleep than is positively necessary; and I think it was Dick who made me late, not I him," said Clive, smiling involuntarily, poor fellow! under his queen's brightness.

She shook her head, rebukingly.

"You should never throw blame on the absent ones, Mr. Clive. We must hear Dick's account before I decide who was in fault. Hark! the bell has stopped: we must go in;" and then, having kept Clive at her side till they were at the door, she allowed him to follow her into the pew, and take his seat at her side, without betraying, by word or sign, how far rather she would have seen M'Kenzie in his place. Clive was pleased and surprised, M'Kenzie cheerful and indifferent. *He* had not seen the blush which roused such a tempest in the barrister's soul, but Kate was only too conscious of it, and while hating herself for the weakness, became childishly timid lest M'Kenzie should be aware of it as well. It was "all George's nonsense," but very annoying all the same; and he must think her so silly! She was quite grateful for the excuse to turn away to Clive, and by devoting herself exclusively to him distract attention from her *gauche* confusion of a moment back.

Poor Clive! After all he had not so much cause for gratitude as he imagined.

They all walked back to the cottage to dinner as soon as service was over; but Kate had forgotten her blush by now, and M'Kenzie was at her right hand, chatting in the familiar way of an old friend about "our" walk the day

before yesterday, "our" boating adventure, and the place where "we" left off in "Ingoldsby." There was nothing in all that he said put together which might not have been cried at the Town Cross with impunity, but it all implied the pleasant confidence of intimacy; and Clive, who had no share in the "us" and "our," felt shut out and put on one side. The sore, jealous feeling rose again in his breast, mingled with a sense of indignation against his rival; but when he looked at Kate's face, so radiant with innocent happiness, at the expression in her eyes when they rested on M'Kenzie, so soft and liquid, with a trustful love as yet unknown even to herself, that indignation became deepened and strengthened into a purely unselfish passion—sorrow for her, that such love and trust should ever be wasted, and anger against the man who could wrong it by even a shadow of deception. "And to win her love by the pretense of being one thing, while in reality he is another, is such cowardly deception," thought Clive. "No one but a blackguard would trade on a girl's innocence, and her brother's thoughtlessness. Pray God he be not teaching *her* deception too! Surely if Lady Margaret knew of his intimacy here she would have made some allusion to it—would have wished to know something more of the man with whom her daughter was thrown, and have taken some precautions against the imperiling of her peace of mind. She can never know, or she would have taken better care of her daughter."

Clive's own passion had faded out of his mind amid these thoughts. His whole heart was filled with Kate, her happiness and her innocence, to the exclusion of himself, and his own wishes. He was fretting and fuming within himself because no one took proper care of her; or considered her interest with sufficient zeal; but just then Kate turned round and smiled upon him, rebuking him with playful imperiousness for being "so silent," and once again the lover resumed his place, and with clenched fist and set jaw Clive muttered to himself:

"She shall not be given up to him so easily. If she hated me she could never speak to me in such a tone, and

if no one else will take care of her, I will. She is but a child, needing guidance and protection at every step to save her from the shoals and breakers of whose very existence she is ignorant; and I should be a coward indeed if, loving her as I do, I were to shrink from being that guide and protector because she has given me so little encouragement to declare my love."

It was the resolve of a moment; but as it passed it gave his face its harshest expression, and his voice, as he answered Kate, sounded so gruff and short, that she involuntarily repented her of having tried to be sweet to such a disagreeable man; and even M'Kenzie lifted his dark eyes and looked at him half inquiringly.

"He is in love with her, and jealous," thought the Canadian, with a faint smile. "Poor devil! I'm afraid he hasn't the ghost of a chance, and certainly he isn't going the right way to win one. Surly looks and short answers will never win Katie Bellew. A child could lead her with a silken thread: I doubt if the strongest man living could drag her with a two-inch cable."

"You are abstracted, Mr. Clive," he said, aloud, and more with the object of softening the edge of Clive's ill-tempered manner to Kate than of roughing it against himself. "Do legal complications even follow you down to such a quiet little nest as this? Why don't you copy my example, and fold away your cares with your London coat, not to be opened till your return?"

"Do you find it so easy to leave your cares behind you?" said Clive, turning to him, a peculiar light in his eyes—a peculiar inflection in his voice. "I should have thought there were some cares no man could fold away with his coats—cares which *would* follow him wherever he went, whether he willed to leave them unopened or no."

• Either the tone or the words touched some chord which brought a shade over M'Kenzie's handsome face. His eyes met Clive's with an angry question in them, and he answered, sharply:

"Every man has some troubles, I suppose; but so long as they are not to be remedied, I consider that he is

right and bound to bury them out of even his own sight as far as possible, instead of raking them up to sadden other people."

"The dead rise sometimes without being raked up," retorted Clive, "and ghosts are occasionally unpleasant visitors—the ghosts of buried sins especially."

M'Kenzie's eyes flashed out suddenly till their black depths glowed like two furnaces; and the blood rushed into his face, swelling the veins on his brow like purple cords, and making his whole figure dilate in a manner which made Kate shrink from him in involuntary alarm.

"What do you mean?" he asked, voice and lips quivering with rising passion. "What the devil have you—"

"My dear Mr. M'Kenzie, don't excite yourself, or you will frighten our young hostess," said Clive, coolly. "We never advert to his gracious majesty below stairs in English society. *You* alluded to the legal complications weighing on my mind—didn't you? I was referring to certain of those very complications which had come within my experience. Surely you couldn't have taken my words as applying to yourself?"

The words were more soothing than the tone, which savored of the sarcastic. M'Kenzie, however, had had time to recollect himself, and repent of his late violence. By a stupendous effort, terrible even to see in one whose passions were naturally so strong—an effort which drove away every vestige of color from his face, so lately suffused with rage—he mastered his emotion as suddenly as it had mastered him. There was even a smile visible under his heavy moustache, as turning to Clive, he said, all trace of anger gone from his voice:

"Miss Bellew knows what an excitable backwoodsman I am; but indeed, Mr. Clive, you speak so ambiguously at times, that, setting apart my long absence from English society, I may be excused for not always being sure of what you do mean. I don't expect I am any different from other men in having many a buried fault to regret; yet I could hardly (as you say) suppose *you* to be alluding to them."

He spoke so frankly, and in such a tone of good-hu-

mored dignity, that for a moment Clive felt rebuked, and staggered in his suspicions. Only for a moment, however. The next, his common sense asserted itself, and told him that that blaze of passion had never been evoked if his words had not hit home to some secret sore.

"I struck the right nail on the head there," thought Clive; "but what a hypocrite the fellow must be, to be able to assume that air of virtuous forbearance! 'Faults,' indeed! He shall let me know before to-night if those faults be the same as some I have heard of; and if so, he is no fit suitor for Lady Margaret's daughter; and she shall know it too, unless he withdraw himself."

Dottie's little voice broke up his moulding resolutions.

"Is oo cwiss?" she asked, slipping her tiny hand into his. "And is Misser M'Tenzie angwy wis oo? Him fwightened me so much. Don't oo be cwiss too."

"No, Dottie—I'm not cross now. Stay with me and I'll take care of you, and not let you be frightened by any one," Clive answered, with a sudden softening in his tone, a sudden warmth and gratitude at his heart, which showed what tenderness could do for him, poor fellow! and which was perhaps intensified by the sight of Kate, who, irritated at his rudeness to her friend, and keenly appreciative of the latter's victory over himself, was devoting herself, to entertain him with even more than her usual sunny grace.

Clive took Dottie up in his arms, kissing the baby-lips twice before he hoisted her on to his shoulder.

"Would you like a ride, little lady?" he said, rather huskily. "Hold tight, then, and we'll be home before any one else;" and so started off, Madge and George following in high glee at the spectacle, and leaving the other two to follow at their leisure.

The day, which ought to have been so pleasant among a party of young people thrown together in this impromptu picnic-like fashion, but which was in reality full of constraint and awkwardness, and an odd feeling of thunder in the air, ready to burst at any moment, came to an end at last. Kate had intended to divide her attentions impartially; but Dick monopolized Clive; and

as the latter made no effort to break away, but rather seemed to avoid her than otherwise, she was, as it were, thrown upon M'Kenzie; and indeed, after the first, felt rather glad that fate had so willed it; for, whether from some reminder contained in Clive's words, or other cause unknown, he had fallen into one of those depressed moods which made Kate's heart yearn to him, with that wistful tenderness which seems part of the maternal instinct inherent in every woman from the time of her first doll. Once he said, in answer to some remark of hers:

"I am not sure that I shall stay in England. Sometimes I think of returning to America for good."

And then Kate's cheek grew suddenly pale, and her great eyes round with involuntary dismay.

"You don't mean it? Oh! surely you would not go away from all your friends again," she said, in a quick, anxious voice, which betrayed quite unconsciously to herself what such a going away would be to her; but which Clive heard, and against his own will understood at more than its right meaning.

"Why not?" said M'Kenzie, smiling half sadly. "I have not so many friends as you think, Miss Bellew—none, at any rate, to whom my going or staying would make any difference."

"That is what *you* think," said Kate, warmly, "and perhaps you don't count us; but, Mr. M'Kenzie, we should care—all of us. Do not think of going. England is much pleasanter than America, and, besides, it is your home. I thought you were quite happy here. Why should you want to go traveling away again?"

He looked down at her, smiling still. There was something so wonderfully pretty—so childishly innocent in the coaxing appeal. "How can you wish to travel away from *me* again?" was written in such perfect unconsciousness on the lifted face, the little rose-tipped fingers clasped so tightly over her knee. Surely M'Kenzie read that writing, and by his extra dozen years of experience guessed the secret—a secret even to its mistress—which petal by petal was slowly breaking from bud to flower in that girlish heart! No! Far away, over nearly

half of those twelve years—over more than twelve hundred miles of land and sea, the man's mind, struck by some echo in the voice, some line in the lissom stooping figure, had wandered to a darkened room in a far-distant country—to a silent form, awful in its mute, rigid whiteness, stretched upon the bed; and a woman not many years older than Kate—but, ah, God! how different—a woman gold-haired and regal-browed as Guinevere of old, borne in his arms on to the lobby without. Four years ago! and yet, as though it were but an hour back, he seemed to feel the weight of those queenly, senseless limbs; the cold touch of the pale, pure cheek against his breast; the cascade of glittering hair dripping, like a rain of living gold, well-nigh to the floor over his supporting arm; the slender fingers clinging even in that deadly faintness to his coat, as, when laying her down in the fresh air and sunshine outside, he caught a murmur from the parted lips:

"Don't leave me, Dallas—stay."

Dick's voice startled him to the present.

"Lucky fellow you are, M'Kenzie!" he said, lazily—"able to go off to Australia or Canada at an hour's notice, and with not as much bother as I have to go through if I want to come up to London from Oxford. That's the good of having no family ties and that sort of thing."

Clive was leaning back in an American chair, playing at cat's-cradle with Dottie, who, perched on his knee, with her little pink, plump legs dangling far from the ground, was laughing up in his face, as her fat fingers blundered through the mesh held in those long and strong ones for her delectation. His blue eyes flashed out in a keen glance over her head, as he spoke in answer to Dick's remark.

"Perhaps, Dick, Mr. M'Kenzie's family ties are *in* Canada, in which case neither we nor Miss Bellew could wonder at his being anxious to return to them. A man must always feel in rather a false position when living apart from all his natural belongings.—Don't you agree with me, Mr. M'Kenzie?"

He raised his voice a little at the last words, fixing his

eyes in an unspoken challenge on M'Kenzie's face; and the latter met them fully and defiantly. It was the first clash of steel in a duel to the death; but he who had delivered that preliminary feint was cool and collected, while there was an angry flush on his antagonist's brow—an agitated break in his voice, as he guarded.

"My natural belongings are confined to a few Scottish relations, who care as little for me as I for them. Family ties of my own I have none—here or in Canada."

A pause. Dottie found the cradle slipping with miraculous gentleness on to her fingers, and was lifted lightly to the floor, with a kiss of congratulation on her skill.

"Dick," said Clive, rising to his feet, one hand still on the little golden head, "will you write that letter you want me to take back with me to-morrow? I may start early, so I should like to have it as early as may be. Suppose you do it now while I'm having a smoke on the beach; Miss Bellew very rightly disapproves of late hours; and you're such a lazy fellow, you won't stir while you've an excuse for *idlesse* in my company."

He spoke to Dick, but he looked at M'Kenzie still. "I will go with you," said the latter, in answer to that look; and Clive nodded. After all, that had only been the preliminary sharpening of the weapons. The real duel was to come; a duel with no seconds and no witnesses: a duel not for life or death, but for sweeter than life and sharper than death—for honor or dishonor.

And even innocent, light-hearted Katie felt a cold shiver of some impending evil creep over her warm young limbs, and dim the roses in her fresh fair cheeks, as she listened, anxious but uncomprehending. Yet there was a smile on each man's face as he turned to her before going out.

"What time do you have tea, Miss Bellew?" said M'Kenzie. "Eight? Thanks. We won't keep it waiting; but I'm sure you'll be glad to get rid of us for a few minutes, after devoting yourself to us so kindly through the whole day."

"Wherefore we won't inflict ourselves on you a moment

before eight," added Clive.—"Dick, you lazy beggar, you'll want all that time to get your screed accomplished, and I shan't show till it is."

"That's nonsense," retorted Dick. "It'll take ten minutes at most; and if you're not in by then I'll come out and join you.—I say, Kittie, where the deuce is the ink?"

"Fortunately, ten minutes will be more than sufficient for what I have to say," said M'Kenzie, as, after descending to the beach in silence, they turned an angle of the cliff which shut them out of hearing of even any "little pitchers" who might be in the gardens above. "I've no doubt you can guess what it is, Mr. Clive."

"I am waiting to hear," said Clive. "But if you mean I guess you have *something* to say, you are more than right. I hope as well as guess it."

His tone was aggressive, almost insolent; and M'Kenzie's hands, clasped behind his back, tingled and clenched each other as in a vice before he replied.

"Your manner to me to-day has been unpleasant enough to warrant such a hope. It may be attributable to a young man's jealousy, and however causeless such a feeling in the present case, I could excuse it were it only confined to a short and ungracious manner—"

"In other words, you would carefully avoid taking hold of it as long as I gave you nothing to take hold of," said Clive, slowly and calmly. "You are magnanimous, Mr. M'Kenzie. I'll relieve your mind of one scruple, however; I am not actuated by any feelings of jealousy whatsoever. To say I was not aware I had cause for them, would be rude when you so plainly imply the reverse; so—I don't say it."

M'Kenzie's eyes flashed. "I believe you wish to insult me," he said, hotly. "You have thrown out more than one hint and insinuation to-day reflecting either on my honor or general character.—Stay, sir! let me speak. I don't believe that our friends have understood your innuendoes, but—"

"I agree with you," said Clive. "Wanting the clue which *you* possess, they have not even perceived the innuendoes which you understood and complain of."

"*Complain!* You mistake, sir. I do more than complain; I demand an explanation on your part for the past, and an apology for your present language. Excuses are, I see, wasted on you."

"Entirely," said Clive, "seeing that I am here to force the explanation; only it is to come from you as well as me. Excuses! Why, confound it! I think you ought to be grateful to me for having led you to speak to me yourself, instead of saying what I had to say to our friends yonder. Do you think that if I pleased I couldn't have made them understand the drift of my discourse as well or better than yourself? Dick Bellew is one of my nearest friends. He trusts his most private affairs to me as to an elder brother. What was to hinder me from speaking to him about withdrawing his sisters from your society, and giving him my full reasons for such a caution? Of my own free will I have spoken to you instead; and that you understood me at all is the best proof of the justice of my suspicions. You say I have been uncivil to you; I don't deny it. You want an explanation? Take it.

"Four years ago, before I entered at the Bar, I had occasion to go to Canada. I arrived at S. Louis-sur-Eaux, a little town on the borders, just as a wedding party was leaving the church—Mr. M'Kenzie, you grow pale: do I interest you?—I did not see the bride's face; it was looking from me and hidden in her veil; but that of the bridegroom was turned full on me, and though I've no doubt he never noticed my presence, I could have sworn to him anywhere in aftertimes—I could swear to him now. *You, sir, and no other man!* Two years later I again crossed the Atlantic, on my first legal business. At the bar of a New York hotel I heard a certain Mr. Dallas M'Kenzie spoken of as an eccentric bachelor, a woman-hater and misanthrope. He was discussed openly among a dozen men, and as openly the reason of his avoidance of women was given in half-a-dozen words—some affair with a lady! Female society had cut Mr. M'Kenzie: Mr. M'Kenzie had revenged himself by cutting it.—Stop! Excuse me; you asked for an ex-

planation, I have only given you part of one as yet. I met the gentleman in question at a men's dinner-party. We traveled together for two days by rail: I found him a pleasant companion, a polished gentleman; in fact I liked him; *but* I noticed he spoke of himself as a bachelor. If marriage were discussed he joined in the question simply as an outsider, and to inveigh against it; and I, remembering the new-made wife I had seen on his arm that day at S. Louis-sur-Eaux, wondered within myself. Accident solved my wonderment. In a lawyer's office I happened to mention my late traveling companion by name.

"My friend nodded.

"'M'Kenzie! H'm—ha—yes, I've met him; very pleasant fellow, superior and—but a man with daughters and all that, you know, must be careful. You've heard—'

"I said I had.

"'Ah! that's not all there is to hear: I suppose no one ever told you he is married?'

"I said I was aware of it.

"'In Canada; separated from his wife since, I believe, and mixed up in a very awkward case of bigamy. It was hushed up, fortunately for him; but a man with daughters, you know—one *must* be careful.'

"I agreed with him. Two years later I again met the gentleman in question, this time in England and at a ball at General de Ponsonby's. I meet him often now; I hear him spoken of as a bachelor, eligible and estimable in all respects; I find him domesticated on terms of the greatest intimacy with the sons and daughters of a lady who honors me with her friendship and confidence; I see him winning the regard of a young girl as innocent as she is inexperienced; I see him trading upon her guileless trust, flaunting his false plumes, and acting—"

"A LIE! Do you hear me? A foul, cowardly, slanderous lie from beginning to end! I a scoundrelly bigamist! I a— By heavens, how you dare—"

M'Kenzie got no further. By a perfectly frightful effort at self-control, belied by his white, churning lips and quivering hands, he had forced himself to listen for a given

time. Before Clive had finished that control broke down; and like a tiger he turned upon his accuser with clenched fist as in act to strike, and white, infuriate lips, hurling the fierce invective of denial at the latter's head.

That denial was never finished.

The tide had risen, so that they had left the beach, and were pursuing a narrow path hewn partly by nature, partly by the hand of man, out of the face of the cliff. Below them, at the distance of two or three feet, rippled the purple waters of the Channel, stretching away in long waving lines of ever-deepening violet to the horizon. The sun had set, and the two men and the water were in shadow; but over the horizon floated one long cloud like a streak of blood, and all the eastern sky was suffused with a faint rosy light; while far above their heads the towering cliffs were stained with a crimson glory on their summits—the last reflection of the descended orb of day. There was just room on this path for two men to walk abreast with comfort. Higher up it narrowed, and became a mere thread where one could hardly find space to set his foot, but here was room for both; and M'Kenzie had the inside and was slightly in advance. In that burst of fury he turned with a kind of spring on Clive. The latter started aside, involuntarily lifting his arm to avoid the threatened blow; and without word or touch, by the sheer impetus of his own unthinking passion, M'Kenzie stumbled, and went headlong into the rising waters below!

One sharp, agonized cry, and then—a dead silence; but far, far overhead a gull flew past with a long wailing note, as if to carry the echo of that cry to heaven; and into the holes and caverns of the cliffs the waves rushed with a solemn thunderous roll, as though the sea were firing a funeral salute over the ex-officer's grave.

CHAPTER XXIV.

"WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH HIM?"

LONG ago I heard a woman say to her son, in a fit of irritation, "If you will persist in going out of doors bareheaded in a tropical country, you will get a sun-stroke; and really I shall not be sorry, for I am sick of warning you."

That same day her son was brought home to her, struck down like a log under the burning noonday sun. Before another morning he was *dead*; and I, going into the darkened room, found a miserable, maddened woman, crouching beside the corpse, with tearless eyes and parched, chalky lips, which murmured over and over again in ceaseless refrain:

"I told him I would not be sorry—not sorry—not sorry. Yes, I told him so—that *I—would—not—be—sorry.*"

They brought her home afterwards—to a lunatic asylum in her native country. I believe she is living still, a harmless maniac, ever reciting the same monotonous litany of despair.

While Clive had been telling his story to M'Kenzie, his acute eye had noted accurately the signs of fury rising and fermenting in the latter's breast. Once, when the Canadian attempted to interrupt him, the thought did cross his mind, "I wish we were on *terra firma*, for this passionate fellow is quite capable of pitching himself or me over the edge if he is worked up;" and again—"Prevised is prevented for me. Let *him* take a cold bath if he will: it will cool his passion—I shan't prevent him."

Now, five minutes later, the thought had come to pass, and M'Kenzie had gone face-foremost into the purple curling waves, his passion cooled in one stupendous splash.

The water was not five feet deep at this part, and to a swimmer would but have been the "cold bath" Clive had called it. That M'Kenzie could swim and swim well, he happened to know; and after the first start and gasp of surprise he came to the edge of the path, bending over and stretching out his hands, in the full expectation of seeing M'Kenzie rise dripping from his "douche," and of hauling him, discomfited and humiliated, on to dry land again.

He was disappointed.

Up, almost to touch his finger-tips, leaped the waves, breaking in little showers of foam and spray against the cliff. He could see the brown tangled seaweed floating like a mermaid's web beneath their glittering surface; here and there an out-jutting rock standing up like the fangs of some deceased sea-monster; a dead bird gliding swiftly past, the bloody hole still visible on its upturned breast, ere it was whirled out to sea by the powerful current sweeping round those rocky shores; but—*no M'Kenzie!* If the gnomes of the sea had dragged him down and pinioned him within their twilight palaces beneath, there could not have been less sign of him or his existence.

"Good God!" cried Clive; "the man must have stunned himself against the bottom;" and only waiting to jerk off his coat and boots, without thinking of danger to himself, or of his late animosity to the missing man—without thought of anything, in fact, except that there was something to be done, and he must do it, he swung himself over the edge of the path into the waters which had gulfed and hidden the Canadian. As he did so, his foot struck against a naked hand firmly clenched over a sunken rock, dislodged it from its hold, and in the same moment a dark, heavy body, with outstretched limbs and black, dripping hair, rose heavily to the surface, amid a perfect whirlpool of bubbles and marine débris. The

shock almost knocked Clive off his feet. Had it quite done so, the sea-gulls might have sung, *Requiescat in pace*, over both of them; for as to swimming, the clever lawyer could do about as much of that as most inland-reared young fellows, or—twelve-inch shot! By a desperate effort he recovered himself, and in the same moment made a clutch at M'Kenzie, who, opening his great black eyes with a glare of returning consciousness as the cold breeze smote upon his face, caught at the outstretched hand, and fastened on it with a grip which threatened to drag both men to the bottom.

"Hold hard, if you please," said Clive. He spoke quite coolly, though it was only by an almost superhuman effort of masculine strength that he could keep his footing against the current alone, and this frenzied clutch threatened to shake him off it altogether. "You're all right. Put your feet down instead of your head, that's all."

"Save me!" cried M'Kenzie, faintly. His head was bleeding from a cut above the temple, and his grasp loosened from weakness and bewilderment.

Clive took advantage of it to wrest his arm free, and in the same instant caught a firm hold of his antagonist's collar, while with the other hand he braced himself against a protruding fang of rock. To move thus impeded, and with the water up to his breast, was impossible. It required all his strength to hold M'Kenzie's head above the waves, until the latter was sufficiently recovered from his second attack of faintness to recognize where he was, and be able to assist himself. When that was achieved, the rest was easy. With one stroke of his arm, the Canadian was under the lee of the cliff not three yards distant, and in another minute had scrambled—half-drowned, with the blood oozing from his forehead and mingling with the sea-water on his face in purple streaks, but otherwise uninjured—on to the path whence his passion had hurled him down. Clive tried to follow, but that last powerful strain had done for his strong right wrist for the present. His first effort to grasp the cliff to which he had floundered wrung from

him an involuntary cry of pain; and yet it did not hurt him half as much as the necessity of letting his rival help him up. *That* turned his lips white, and made him wince as no physical torture could have ever done.

M'Kenzie, however, guessed nothing of the feeling. Equally impulsive in his gratitude as in his anger, he would, had he been a Frenchman, have flung himself into Clive's arms, and hugged him in a transport of emotion. Being an Anglo-Saxon, he spared Clive that demonstration, and, instead, inflicted on his left hand (the only available one) a grip to which his drowning clutch had been but child's play.

"You have saved my life," he said, hoarsely. "How can I ever thank you enough?"

"Pray don't try," said Clive, looking away from the earnest eyes, and releasing his hand as quickly as he could. "You've no cause for thanks, I assure you."

"Not when you jumped in and hauled me out when I was disabled from helping myself? Why, my dear fellow, I might have been drowned but for you. I suppose I hit my head against one of those confounded rocks, for—Good God! if you hadn't helped me, where should I have been now?"

"At the bottom," interrupted Clive, almost rudely. "Excuse me if I don't join in your rejoicings. As I happened to be on the spot, I was compelled to remember that there is such a thing as being accessory to another man's death, without actually assisting him to it. Believe me"—and he spoke with a savage earnestness which disdained pretense—"if I could have chosen, fate would have planted me twenty miles off, and saved Kate Bellew from the intrigues of a—"

"Blackguard!" suggested M'Kenzie, as Clive broke off with a shrug of his broad shoulders, and began pulling on his coat.

The Canadian did not speak angrily. A furrow of pain and natural mortification had come upon his brow at this second repulse, more churlish than the last; but wrath was not to be aroused a second time that evening. Do you not think that angry tongue of the second Henry

was slow and careful for many a day after the blood shed before the high altar of the cathedral at Canterbury had ceased to redden the marble steps, and the corpse of the murdered archbishop had been carried away out of sight of friend and enemy alike? M'Kenzie went up to the barrister, and laid his hand on his shoulder.

"You think me that, and worse?" he said. "Has your legal experience never taught you that before deciding on a case you should hear both sides of it? Look here, Clive"—and though he smiled, there was an echo of past pain and sorrow in his voice, which touched his rival in spite of himself—"you have given me the outlines of a story which any man might resent to hear told in connection with himself. Do you *want* to hear the true one? Twenty minutes ago my pride was up, and I wouldn't have told it you, first because you nor any other man has a shadow of right to ask it from me; and next because, if you had had the right, I would not have owned it when claimed in such a tone; but since then you've risked your life to save another's, and that other's a man you disliked and despised. Confound it, Clive! Can't you see that, however *you* repudiate his gratitude, *he* must feel that you've done a better thing than if he were a friend of yours? I never thought to speak of that which has darkened my whole life to any living being, man or woman. Don't you know yourself that you'd rather cut your heart out than tell some things to your nearest and dearest friend? You are no friend of mine; but I'm going to tell you now; and when we get to the hotel I'll show you full proof of the truth of my words. Only"—and here the pain in his voice deepened till it grew so hoarse as to be hardly intelligible—"when I've told you my story, don't say anything. You can't do *me* justice without speaking of—of other people. Don't do it."

Clive was sitting on a hummock of sandy earth, pulling on his boots over his wet feet. He looked up keenly and quickly into the dark Southern face, which even through sea-water, blood-stains, and agitation showed so handsome and earnest; and as he did so an uncomfortable sense of being in the wrong, of having allowed prej-

udice to make him insolent and unjust, began to dawn upon his unwilling mind. Indeed I think it was this very reluctance to accept the suggestion, which showed him that in truth he would have preferred to find M'Kenzie the scoundrel he believed him, that though he asked for an explanation, it was the least thing he desired; for when he spoke it was sharply and hurriedly, as if to get the better of his smaller self before it got the better of him.

A great man once said, "It is only a coward who can boast he has never been afraid." An honorable man is generally more conscious of his deceitfulness than a knave.

"Keep your story to yourself," he said, almost roughly. "I have no right to hear it, as you say; and I don't want to hear it, if I had."

M'Kenzie smiled a little bitterly.

"That is all very well," he said, "but, my dear fellow, excuse me—after what you've said, the matter can hardly rest here—with honor."

"I know that," said Clive, shortly, as he rose to his feet, "and that's why I ask you to give me your word as a gentleman that there is no truth whatever in these imputations against your honor. Can you do it?"

"By heavens, yes! Truth in them! They are the foulest lies."

"Then—excuse my pressing you, I only want Yes or No—there is nothing, on your word and honor, against you which need prevent your going up in all honesty to any lady (we won't mention names), and asking her for her daughter's hand?"

"On my word of honor, nothing."

Clive turned round. There was a pale set look in his face.

"That will do," he said. "I am satisfied" (but he didn't look it), "and apologize: though—"

"Go on," said M'Kenzie, quietly. "You are *not* satisfied, and I can see it. Go on."

"Well, if I'm not," Clive answered, bluntly, "it's just this; I meet you here as a bachelor disclaiming all connection with family ties; and yet when I first saw you it was most certainly with—"

"My wife!" said M'Kenzie. He spoke firmly: but that it was difficult for him to speak at all was evident. "Mr. Clive, when a man has lost something which was more precious to him than his own life, he is not fond of talking of it. You are right. I *had* a wife—once. I have nothing now but a memory—she is dead."

Clive turned to him abruptly, and held out his hand, the best part of his nature touched to kindness and generosity.

"Forgive me," he said, his voice softening for the first time—"and thank you. I won't ask any more. I'd no right to ask that, but— Ah, well! I've been in the wrong all through; and all I can do is to repair it. There's this comfort for you," and he tried to speak cordially and gladly, "she—they, I mean—never shared my suspicions down there; and if I've done you harm with Dick by any hint or warning, I'll undo it before to-night is over."

M'Kenzie saw through his late opponent at that moment, and he felt half amused and half sorry for the young fellow who was trying to make the *amende honorable* to him. They had turned homewards, and were walking swiftly under the shadow of the cliff, so as to keep warm in their drenched garments. The red stain had faded out of the sky, and off the downs. No human being was in sight, no sound but the roll of the waves smote upon the ear. Only out at sea a long line of fishing-boats dotted the horizon; and twilight, soft, gray, and shadowy, hung over all, like the veil of a young widow over a face from which the sunshine of happiness has been banished for a time. M'Kenzie laid his hand on his companion's arm.

"I think there is no necessity for you to say anything," he said, good-naturedly. "If our friends didn't share your mistake, what need for enlightening them? And as for Miss Bellew—"

"Pray don't say anything about her," Clive interrupted, hastily. "Her name should never have been mentioned at all. Bad form on my part; and I'm awfully sorry for it; but I know her—all of them, better than you, and when I thought you were deceiving her—then—"

"You came to the rescue, like a knight of chivalry," said M'Kenzie, smiling. "Well, my dear fellow, I quite agree with you that, in general, young ladies' names are best left unmeddled with, either for attack or defense; but as it has been done on this occasion, we may as well not leave the subject unfinished. You think that I am in love with Miss Bellew, and that I'm doing my best, not without success, to make her in love with me, eh?"

Clive bit his lip. He had wronged the Canadian, and repented of his wrong; but he never felt nearer to hating him than at that moment.

"I don't think that you are in love with her—now," he said, in his harshest voice. "If you had been, you could never have said that."

"You are quite right," M'Kenzie answered, good-humoredly. "And now that I have been so frank with you, be the same with me. If I am not in love with her, you are. Am I not right also?"

Clive bit his lip again. There was a slight inflection of amusement in the other's voice, which stung through all his reserve like the barb of a poisoned arrow. Not to reply, however, would have been only a more humiliating form of assent; and denial never came into his head. It is strange, but with some men truth, even on the subject of love, seems more natural than a lie!

"What if you are?" he said, curtly. "I've been a fool, I own it; but at least I've not prosecuted my folly to any one's harm but my own."

"I don't think you have," said M'Kenzie. "It seems to me, though, that the folly lies, not in loving Miss Bellew (who is a very sweet, lovable little girl), but in not prosecuting your love. My dear fellow, I owe you a debt. Let me pay it by relieving your mind. I am not your rival, as you think. I neither wish to marry Miss Bellew, nor have I tried to win her affections. Were I still a married man" (and he sighed), "I could not be more innocent on that subject, and I haven't the least reason to suppose that she is any less so. So far from caring for me in that way, I fancy she is yet free from all thought of love or lovers. Indeed, she is not one of her

greatest charms is that frank, childlike—I was almost saying boyish innocence. It seems a pity to disturb it at all; but if you love her, as I see you do, why may not she see it also; and why don't you tell her so?"

"Tell her!" repeated Clive, in a sort of dismay. He was still bewildered at this second enlightenment. It did not seem credible (though he had been so unwilling to admit his own love even to himself) that another man should be thrown with Kate, as M'Kenzie had been, and not care for her: a man, too, to whom she had shown such sweet favor as to the Canadian! and then he remembered the blush she had given the former that morning, with a fresh sick feeling of pain.

"Not quite such a fool, foolish as I am!" he repeated, bitterly.

"But, my dear Clive—excuse my calling you so," said M'Kenzie, laughing—"it seems to me that you are rather foolish in this. How can you tell whether she likes you or not unless you ask her? Take the advice of a man a good deal older than yourself, and let her see a little of your feelings. Girls like to be courted. It is their prerogative to be served then, as it's their duty to serve us afterwards; and you rather seem to avoid her than otherwise."

"You've thought so, have you?" said Clive. "Then give me credit for non-interference."

"What, when I've told you there is no interference in the case! I like the little girl much—very much. She is quite charming; but as to the idea you suggest, it is all nonsense. That sort of thing has been over with me for many a year."

"Perhaps every one is not as well aware of that as you," suggested Clive. Very undemonstrative himself, he had looked on M'Kenzie's confidential, almost caressing manner with women as rather *prononcé* love-making. The latter broke into a laugh half sad, half merry:

"I think most women have a sort of instinct on that subject," he said. "They know when they are loved, at any rate. We don't; that's why we have to ask them. Take my advice now, and ask her. As for me—look

here—I shan't even see her again. I've no change of clothes with me, and I don't want to get a rheumatic fever from wearing these wet ones; so I shall just go to bed while they're drying, and you can take my excuses round to the cottage for me. I shall send them a line in the morning to say I am summoned up to London on important business, and that I left you to bring George up later. You won't mind looking after the little chap, will you? He'll lean his head and arms out as far as he can in every tunnel, and try to jump out ten minutes before the train stops at every station, and drum the devil's tattoo on your feet for the rest of the way; but perhaps you'll have a brother's right to keep him in order by then. Deuce take it, Clive! I'm not at all sure the bonny little lassie doesn't like you more than you fancy, for the very reason that she's so confoundedly careful to hide it."

"I thought you considered her so childishly innocent," said Clive; but his heart would brighten in spite of himself, and the stern mouth softened into a smile. "M'Kenzie—I hope this isn't generosity on your part."

"Generosity! My dear fellow, I don't pretend to be over-virtuous; and if I were in love with Katie Bellew, neither you nor any other man should have the ghost of a chance from *me* till I had tried my own fate and—failed. As to childishness! have you forgotten Shakespeare's Beatrice?"

"Certainly not," said Clive, coolly, "only Beatrice was never a favorite of mine. I admire Hero."

"So did Benedict, I believe," answered M'Kenzie. "He admired Hero and—*loved* Beatrice. I've no doubt she made him a very happy husband afterwards, for all her little ways."

"I've no doubt he gave her a jolly good thrashing afterwards if she didn't amend her little ways," said Clive, grimly. "Don't compare Kate Bellew to that incarnation of feminine perversity. She's not as bad as all that."

"I don't think she's bad at all," said M'Kenzie, laughing. "Upon my word, you young Englishmen make the oddest lovers going. You begin by criticising and

end by worshipping. We, across the Atlantic, begin by worshipping and end by criticism.—Ha! here we are at the inn. Now, I'm going to have a stiff glass of hot brandy and water, and go to bed. Let me recommend the former to you before going up to the cottage; and don't ask me to congratulate you till to-morrow. I shall be asleep before you come back."

Clive nodded.

"I won't wake you. Good night, and thanks," he said, turning away in his short manner, and going into his own room. M'Kenzie looked after him for a moment, a slight, kindly smile lurking under his moustache.

"Poor fellow! I'm afraid he has not much chance," he said to himself, as he too retired within his own door, and locked it; "but at least he'll feel better if he tries. Those cursed scandal-mongers! So that accounts for his rudeness and insinuations, even without the other. By Jove, what an idea! That she should care for *me*—that pretty little girl, a mere child compared to myself! Bah! I won't believe it. I can't believe it. It's just a lover's jealous fancy; and even if it were true—if it could be—I could never—" He paused, an uncertain look in his eyes, a feverish glow on his dark face, and unlocking a small ebony box, bound together with silver clamps, which stood on the table near his bed, took from it a miniature in an oval velvet case.

"Averil! Averil!" he repeated, letting his face droop upon the fair face held between those quivering palms. "My only love, my wife—ay, for one hour at least, my *wife*. You may have been unworthy, but there was none ever like you. How could I give you a rival in the heart you filled once and—broke!"

And there his voice failed, and he fell to kissing the painted lips, which could give back no response, till the image of the face he should never see again drove out the face he had so lately seen, and the temptation suggested by Clive's over-anxiety was forgotten in fresh vows of fidelity to the old, too faithful past.

It did not take Clive long to change his clothes, even though he had but one hand to do it with. He had no

past to look back on; and cool as he might be in all outward seeming, it was not in the nature of a young fellow, with any blood in his veins at all, to go through an hour such as that which had just ticked out its last minutes on the old church-clock, and not feel its excitement still seething in his brain, and making every pulse in his body quiver with latent fire. The man whom he had thought a scoundrel had satisfied him that he was equally to be respected, and more to be pitied than himself: a gentleman against whom he had no right to warn any one; and who was as free to woo and win Kate Bellew as he, Bernard Clive, if he so pleased. But, on the other hand, it appeared that he did not so please, that so far from being Clive's rival he was anxious to be his friend, and to aid him in his suit. Two enemies had struggled together for life or death, and grown friends in the strife. A duel had been fought, and either party had been at once victor and vanquished. An apparently insurmountable barrier to his love had proved the veriest cobweb of imagination; and—it had all happened in an hour! Little wonder that he bungled hurriedly over his dressing, and only waiting to bind a wet handkerchief round his now stiff and swollen wrist, set out for the cottage.

M'Kenzie had seen through the love which he had hardly admitted to himself, had implied that Kate saw through it too, and laughed at him for faint-heartedness. That accusation at least they should be mistaken in. He might be a fool, but at least he was no coward; and perhaps after all Katie might care for him a little.

It had come on to rain and blow; but he did not heed it as he strode along the steep, dusky street, and finding the cottage-door hospitably open (as was the wont in Combe Regis) passed into the passage, and knocked at the parlor-door within. A voice from inside—Kate's, but sounding unlike her usual tone—answered, "Come in;" and Clive tried to obey. He had forgotten, however, that his right hand was useless, and was making a second bungling attempt to turn the handle with his left, when it was suddenly wrenched round from inside, and Kate stood in the open doorway before him. There was no

one else in the room ; and the candles had not yet been lighted ; but as she stood there, framed in the dark doorway, and cut out as it were against a background of red firelight, with her thick curly hair tinged with red upon the crown, and faint red reflections among the shimmery folds of her white muslin, he saw that her face was deadly pale, and her glance rested on him with an expression of repulsion more intense than he had ever seen in any human face before.

"*You !*" she said, in a sort of whisper, more expressive of deadly, sickening terror than even a shriek could be—"and *alone !*" Her eyes went out into the dark passage as she spoke, as if in search of something, and then fixed themselves on Clive in almost fierce appeal.

"Where is Mr. M'Kenzie ?" she asked—"Mr. Clive, what have you done with him ?" and involuntarily she put out her hand and laid it, with a grasp wonderfully powerful for such baby-fingers, on Clive's arm.

CHAPTER XXV.

UNDER A MISTAKE.

WHEN Clive and M'Kenzie got up to go and smoke their cigars on the beach, Kate remained sitting where they had left her, with a perfectly causeless panic of alarm and anxiety fluttering at her heart. Beneath those stray and apparently meaningless words which had passed between the two men, she could not help fancying that she detected a secret and threatening intelligence. That Clive had some reason for disliking the ex-officer of Engineers she knew, from himself; that the latter had strong and easily roused passions she knew—also from himself. She had seen their eyes meet before they turned to her with *made*, company smiles; and there was no love in the gaze, but steady, inimical defiance; and Katie's heart died within her at the sight. It was very, very silly, it was unladylike, improper; but—oh! if only she had *not* been a lady, if for one little moment she had not been proper, or civilized, or a well-bred, conventional, and feminine member of the nineteenth century “upper ten,” that she might have jumped up, and said to M'Kenzie:

“Let me go with you. I am not tired. I don't mind smoke; and I would rather put up with any amount of fatigue and cigars than, by leaving you together, give Mr. Clive an opportunity of provoking and quarreling with you.”

But M'Kenzie? Was it only *him* then of whom she was thinking? Was it care for him which made her so

childishly nervous? She had not put her feelings into words as I have done. Probably, if told to her, she would not have realized or acknowledged them; but she did realize enough to cover her cheeks with blushes, and tie her tongue, when Dick looked up from his writing and asked her what she was fidgeting about. He couldn't think of what he wanted to say, with a person getting up and sitting down again every second in that stupid fashion. Wasn't she going to church with the children? There was plenty of time, and he really must be left in peace; for Clive (always *Clive*, Kate thought) would be in no end of a wax if the letter wasn't written. Kate didn't think there was time; but she sent off George and Madge (somewhat against their wills) in charge of the maid, and she conveyed little Dottie upstairs, and put her to bed herself, making many mistakes over so doing, and greatly surprising her tiny sister by her lamentable ignorance of nursery details.

"Oo's not untied my twings," said Dottie, after a painful effort to wriggle out of some of her under-garments at Kate's bidding. "Me tan't tate 'em off when zey's not untied. *Oh!* oh-h-h! Katie, me's 'calded—me's twite boilin' 'calded," as Kate, having finished the disrobing, lifted the small woman somewhat too promptly into a bath of unpleasantly hot water. "Martin al'ays puts told water in till my finner lites it," Dottie whimpered, holding a very small finger and a very scarlet foot as high in the air as was consistent with equilibrium; and then Kate kissed the fat little foot, and apologized—"She had not been thinking of the water."

Ah! Katie, what were you thinking of? And that was not the last of the mistakes, either.

"Oo's puttin' soap in mine eyes," said Dottie, presently. "Oh-h-h! Katie! nurse *neffer* 'ponges mine head till de last. Me don't lite the lickle dwops all twickling down on me."

And then Katie had to apologize again.

"But you know, Dottie, I never put you to bed before," she said, meekly; and Dottie straightway invited her to come up to the nursery instead of going in for late dinners at home, and see nurse do it "pwoperly."

Kate was very submissive and good-tempered, taking great pains, and freely acknowledging her short-comings; but when the ceremony was over, and Dottie, being at last ensconced in bed, lifted a small rosy face out of a nest of pillows, and demanded "a nice 'tory—a *true* one, Katie, tarling—all about Jack an' de bean-chalk," Miss Bellew struck work and rebelled.

"I can't tell you a story to-night, Dottie," she said; "I'm tired. There! go to sleep like a good child. Good night;" and dropping a hasty kiss on the beseeching little mouth, went away unheeding.

Don't be *too* hard on her, dear Christian friends who read this. She was very young—only nineteen—a spoiled child, just falling innocently in love for the first time in her life, and too unconscious of the nature of her own feelings to be able to get the mastery of them. She felt disturbed and anxious, but she did not exactly know why, or whether it were right or wrong to encourage her anxiety; and she wanted to be alone, that she might think, but about what she could not have told either; only, of course, thinking was quite right and proper, especially on a Sunday; and being anxious lest two friends should quarrel was also right, and indeed a very Christian and moral feeling, far superior to story-telling; but she did not even argue the matter so far within herself. The feeling and the wish were on her, and she gratified them unquestioningly, as she was used to gratifying her little girlish fancies, or to seeing them gratified by those belonging to her—the "divine rights" of the eldest in the Bellew household being a position alike sacred and undisputed.

Kate did not go into the parlor, where the "scratch, scratch" of Dick's pen, accompanied by a rippling murmur of something which sounded like a witch's litany, showed that he was yet laboring over his letter—a letter which was indeed very difficult to write, for the writer wanted to say one thing, and imply another; to cast off a young woman's claims, and retain her affections; to free himself, and bind her; to obey Clive in the letter, and disobey him in the spirit; a task which could hardly

be considered an easy one, even by the most astute of diplomatists—but she wandered instead into the little garden, where, wrapped in a shawl, she paced up and down the narrow walk under the sea-wall, pausing every now and then to give a long look across the sandy, shell-strewn beach, and persuading herself, after each fruitless glance, that she had only been watching the waves rushing up, to break in foaming ripples on the glistening shore, or the fading, faint red light on the distant sandstone cliffs and purple headlands.

Presently something interrupted her.

Two boys had come under the wall, and were talking. The wind caught some of their words, and flung them up to Kate as she paused on the garden-path above; but they might have been so many stones, to judge from the violent start she gave, and the suddenness with which her bright color (higher than usual from contact with the chilly evening breeze) faded to a dull, sickly white. This was what she heard:

“Zays I, theer’s murder doin’ yonner—murder, an’ nout else.”

“Eh, Zammy, yo’re nout else but’n fooil yo’sel’,” answered the second speaker, as Kate, sick and shivering, crept closer to the wall. “What’never ’ould gentry-folk want wi’ murderin’ o’ theysel’n? Moast like they be’s play-actors a-tryin’ ower what’ns got to zay i’ the booth.”

“Play-actors! It’s yo’ as knaws nout, Ben. Tell yo’ a heerd un zay to t’other, ‘It’s a domned lie;’ an’ then coam a mouthful o’ curzes, an’ then a zort o’ yell, like as though t’other had beaten he down; an’ then a loup an’ splash i’ th’ watter. A lookit an’ lookit ower th’ cliff, an’ a couldno zee nout’n; an’ then a creepit a bit roun’ an’ stoopit lower, an’ a zeed th’ won veller stannin’ a’ by her-sel’, bendin’ down an’ pushin’ summat back i’ th’ watter; an’ then a were tookit skeered lest her mout zee I, an’ a oop an’ runned away as zlick as e’er a could, an’ zays I, theer’s murder done, an’ nout elsen; zo coam along, Ben, an’ tell feyther all aboat it. Eh, won’t theer be a rouse i’ th’ town!”

“Aye; but, Zammy, tell us furrst—which’n ever was it

floong t'other in?" Ben's voice asked eagerly, and Sammy's answered as from a distance:

"Her as coam to th' Red Lion afoor night; th' big veller wi' gray cloathes, an' a hat made'n a bit o's coat."

There was no more to be heard. The footsteps died away along the beach, and all was silent; but surely Kate had learned enough! For some seconds she did not move or speak, but remained dumb and motionless, crouching against the wall like one stunned by a heavy blow. She was not actually fainting—she had never fainted in her life; and she was conscious—conscious of a great abyss of pain and horror and crime opening under her feet; but if any one had called to her in that moment she could not have answered. If the wall had given way beside her she could not have moved. It was as if she were stupefied and numbed into a sort of half-life, where only one fact was present to her, one sound whirling in her brain—"M'Kenzie murdered by Clive! *Murdered—by—Clive!*"

Even her lips kept repeating it in faint, semi-unconsciousness of the meaning; and then—all of a sudden the church-clock struck eight far away on the hill; and as if that low, booming sound, telling stroke by stroke of the hour when they were to have returned, woke her suddenly to the knowledge that one at least would never come back, she sprang to her feet with a low, sharp cry, and dropping the shawl, which she had been holding round her, on to the dewy grass, rushed into the house with white face and damp, loosened hair, to look for her brother.

He was not there.

The fact was that having finished his letter, and not seeing any one to talk to, Dick had gone out with his cigar to join the other men. Unfortunately he didn't know which way they had taken, and after staring up and down the beach, and invoking sundry maledictions on his own stupidity in not asking them, started (with the usual perversity of fate) in precisely the wrong direction. But Kate did not know this; and to find an empty room where she had expected help and comfort in her dire ter-

ror and anxiety, to be left *alone* in the first peep of tragedy which had opened its dark lantern on her gay, girlish life, she who had never been alone in even the tiniest trouble or perplexity before—was too cruel a calamity. Big, agonized tears of helplessness and fright came into her beautiful brown eyes, and ran over her pale cheeks, as she called, trembling and terrified, for the landlady, and asked her if she had heard of “anything dreadful happening that evening—any one killing another—a—a murder?”

“Lor’ bless my soul, m’m! No, for sure. Whatever’s put such an idea in your head?” cried Mrs. Dobson, staring and excited, as was only natural at being asked such an unlooked-for question in her own quiet parlor; and before the eager, vulgar flutter of curiosity in the good woman’s face and manner, Kate felt the blood rush into her cheeks again, as she faltered that she had heard two boys talking of a murder that had just been committed on the beach. She had been too frightened to stop them, and they had gone on up into the village. Had not Mrs. Dobson heard *anything* of it?

Mrs. Dobson looked more pleasantly excited than before; and said, “Lor’ bless my soul, m’m! No,” again in a tone which betrayed her disappointment that she had missed the information.

“But sakes alive! You’re all trembling, m’m,” she said. “Do ’ee sit down, an’ I’ll get ’ee a glass of water afore I run over to the shop an’ see if they’ve heard nothing. A murder for sure now! ’Ee don’t say so, m’m! Dear heart! but that’ll be summut to stir us up a bit, wi’ th’ inquest and all. An’ didn’t they say nothink as to who ’twas as murdered t’other, or was murdered? No one you’d know, m’m, for sure?” asked the good woman, in quite a little glow of expectation; but Kate would say no more. Well-born and bred little lady that she was, she felt thrown back on herself, ashamed and self-disgusted at having her natural horror and dismay met by only vulgar, lively curiosity. She was a girl of the period by education, it is true, but she had by nature the shy, virginal instinct, which has not—thank God!—wholly

departed from our English womankind, of shrinking from public notice in anything painful, or questionable, as from public sin. She shook her head silently and let the landlady go, and then cast herself down shivering and half sobbing by the fire. It was too late to help him of whom even then she did not think as of one she might have loved, but as of one foully and cruelly injured. If it were true, the deed was done, and past all recall; but was it—could it be so indeed? Could there be no mistake? and, oh! where—where was Dick that he did not come in? Each minute as it passed seemed like an hour to the terrified, overstrung girl; and she almost screamed when at last, without any knock at the outer door, or other note of warning, she heard the tramp of a man's foot in the passage, the touch of a man's hand on the door-handle. It was not Dick. She knew *that* in a moment. Her senses, sharpened to unnatural keenness, told her who it was in the same second, long before the hand, fumbling with—oh, God! could it be?—the awkwardness of conscious guilt, had succeeded in opening the door; and unable longer to bear the suspense, she flung it wide herself, and saw facing her, in the red, flickering firelight, Clive! not dressed with his usual neatness, not even in the clothes he had gone out in; with his hair damp and ruffled; and on his cheek, something which almost turned her physically sick to look upon—a dry crimson stain!

What followed we have heard.

I have read in an old Book that a certain man staggering, sick and red-handed, from the scene of a murder, was met by One walking upon the earth, who said to him:

"Where is Abel, thy brother? . . . What hast thou done?"

And Cain, knowing with the knowledge of despair that he was discovered, yet lifted his blood-stained face to meet that Eternal gaze, and answered in sullen defiance:

"I know not. Am I my brother's keeper?"

Had Clive in that quarrel by the sea-shore raised his hand against the Canadian, even in self-defense—had

the waves drawn M'Kenzie forever under their ceaseless, silent current, think you that that old-world scene, on the eastern outskirts of the Garden of Eden, would not have risen up before him, and that he would not have seen again the lithe, round limbs stretched still and lifeless beside the altar, where the smoke of acceptance was yet rising into the blue of an eastern sky, and the blood which had cried from the ground for vengeance to the Lord was trickling slowly away in an incarnadine stream among the herbs and grasses of the field? Think you he would not have found his Nemesis then in that look of horror from the girl he loved—that accusing whisper, “What have you done with him?”

Lo creo! And Clive was not guilty, but innocent. He had saved life, instead of destroying it. Judge, then, of the bitterness of his reward!

For a moment he was utterly taken aback, and simply met Miss Bellew's gaze with one of stupefied wonder. Then, as he saw her lips blanch, and felt her hand tremble on his arm, he answered quickly:

“*Done with him!* M'Kenzie! What should I have done with him? Really”—with some natural indignation—“I don't understand you, Miss Bellew.”

The tone was one of utter surprise, not unmingled with rebuke. It was rather hard on him, poor fellow, to be met, on coming to try his fate with the woman he loved, not by a word of welcome for himself, but an eager question for the man he could not help looking on as his rival—unconscious, perhaps, but his rival all the same. But what on earth had agitated the girl, that she should look and speak like this? Had any one frightened her? Good heavens! how white she was!

“Are you alone? What is the matter?” he asked, forgetting his first natural offense in concern, and instinctively laying his hand over the little fingers still clenched on his lamed wrist. “Miss Bellew—Kate, don't look like that, child. Has anything happened to alarm you?”

For all reply Kate tore away her hand from under his, her eyes fixing with an awful look of dread and repulsion on the wet bandage she had touched.

"What *has* happened? Tell *me!*" she gasped, facing him, even while she shrank away with a mingled terror and ferocity, which almost made Clive wonder if her mind had gone astray.

"Happened? Nothing," he said, suppressing an involuntary quiver of the lips at the physical pain caused by the rude jar on his injured hand. "Sit down, and try and be calm. Where is Dick—or your maid? Surely they have not left you alone for any infernal scoundrel to annoy you?"

Kate did not even hear him. She saw he was approaching her, and tried to wave him back; but her limbs tottered under her. There was a dark mist before her eyes, a singing in her ears; and then—in the same moment there came a hasty tap at the door; and Mrs. Dobson entered, flushed and panting with hurry and importance.

"Oh! I beg parding—I beg parding, I'm sure, m'm," the good woman stammered, her quick eye detecting Clive's presence in a moment; and with a gleam of conscious intelligence, "Dear heart! You'll excuse me making so bold, m'm, I'm sure; but I just come in to tell as t'other gentleman ain't murdered at all. It were just a bamfoozle o' that lumpin' idiot of a Sam Gosling; but in course this gentleman's been and telled you all about it already; an' I'm sure I don't wonder you was frightened, m'm, an' hopes you'll excuse my intrudin'."

"What did frighten Miss Bellew? And what is this about a murder?" asked Clive, turning with some sharpness to the landlady for a solution of what was utterly bewildering him. Kate had sunk into an armchair, and Mrs. Dobson laughed a little nervously. She did not like the young barrister's tone.

"Well, sir, it was too 'dicolous, an' I'm sure I hopes as you won't be put out; but a silly mooncalf of a boy as lives next door here heard you an' t'other gentleman a-talking under the cliffs; an'— Well, sir, you'll hardly believe it, an' I'm sure I hope you'll laugh, which is what *he* won't if his father takes my advice, an' gives him a right good leatherin' for spreading such stories to drive

quality from the town—but the fool took it into his head that—ha! ha! ha!—that you'd murdered the dark gentleman (as if gentry couldn't have a few words without going to that there length!) an' miss heard tell of it first, and were took dreadfully aback, an' no wonder, sir; and now, of course, half-a-dozen folk either saw t'other goin' into the 'Red Lion,' or heerd him in his own room, an' all right; an' for sure you'll tell miss all about it; so I'll go and get the tea up afore Jane comes in with the young lady an' gentleman."

Exit Mrs. Dobson, smiling and nodding to the last, but all the same convinced at the first glance that the boy had not been such a fool after all; and that if murder had been escaped, there had been, at least, a serious quarrel between this angry-looking gentleman and the Canadian, and a quarrel roused by jealousy; for Mrs. Dobson had already put down the "dark un" as keeping company with Miss Bellew; and Martin, her sister, had differed from her, saying that her young lady had "so many lovyers and folks wantin' her, it wouldn't be likely she'd take up with a black-faced fellow whom she hadn't known more than a few weeks. If it were Mr. Philpots, now, as preached beautiful he did, at St. Mark's church in the square, an' were ready to kiss the ground Miss Bellew walked on, for all Mrs. Fothergill's scraggy daughter were so sweet on him."

[N. B.—Servants *never* know or care anything about what goes on upstairs among their masters and mistresses! Oh dear, no! What interest can it be to them?]

The door had closed, and Kate and Clive were alone together, yet at first neither spoke. Kate had covered her burning face with her hands while Mrs. Dobson was speaking; and when she looked up, Clive was still standing gazing steadily down at her. Their eyes met, and without a word Clive turned away and, resting his elbow on the mantel-piece, shaded his eyes with his hand, as though lost in thought. Outside, the rain was pattering on the ivy-leaves by the window; and, borne on the wet cold wind, came by fits and starts a murmur of many

voices, blended in some wild hymn-tune, from the little Dissenting chapel at the back.

"Mr. Clive," said Kate, rising up, and speaking with a very trembling little voice, and very scarlet cheeks, as shame succeeded to bewilderment and thanksgiving, "I—I'm afraid that I—I have made a mistake—"

She must have spoken very low, for he did not move, or seem to hear; and, plucking up her courage, Kate came nearer, and made a second effort at conciliation—wonderful for her.

"I am sorry I was so silly," she said, trying to smile, but feeling more nervous than she would have liked to acknowledge; and then Clive turned to her, and Kate flinched afresh, for his face—all but that red stain—was deadly white; and round his eyes were two dark circles of pure mental pain.

"Kate," he said, taking her hand in his, and holding it firmly while he looked into her face, "do you mean to tell me that you believed just now that—I had *murdered* Dallas M'Kenzie?—I!"

Kate started and stammered, and grew first red, and then white. Unreadiness of speech was most certainly not one of her defects in general; but to have her hand taken—gripped, one may say—in that manner; and to be called "Kate"—not even *Miss* Kate, but Kate!—and this by Bernard Clive of all people—it was too out-of-the-way and unparalleled a circumstance not to put the bravest young lady off her nerve for a moment. Her eyes grew round and wide, as though the scarlet blushes beneath were dilating them; and she tried vainly to free her hand as she faltered:

"I—you forget what I heard the boy say; and—and when you came in alone, it was only natural I should—"

"Natural that you should think me a murderer!" cried Clive, with an irrepressible bitterness which emphasized itself in his clasp on her hand; "good God! I knew you had not much opinion of me, but *this*—I could hardly have believed it even from you."

His face was in deep shadow, so that Kate could not see the intensity of wistful pain written on brow and

eyes. She was only irritated at his persistency in holding her hand, and at the emphasis he laid on "you," as though he could have expected a good deal of slander and uncharitableness from her, but that she had even gone beyond his expectations.

"I don't know that you have any right to say what opinion I have of you," she said, with a little childish petulance, which made her look rather prettier than before. "And—please let go my hand, Mr. Clive—you know you were out with him; and you don't like him. It may have been very silly; but when I heard what the boy said, I was so frightened that—"

"That, in your care for Mr. M'Kenzie's safety, you forgot that gentlemen are not in the habit of murdering each other in modern society," put in Clive, with a flash of indignant sarcasm. He had let go her hand the moment he was desired.

"It was not care for Mr. M'Kenzie," said Kate, drawing up her young head proudly. "He is a friend of ours, but I should have felt the same if it had been any one else. When such a thing is done, it is the dreadful wickedness and not the person that one thinks of: and, Mr. Clive, I don't think you should speak in that way to me. No other gentleman does so; and I am not used to it."

If she had not been so fairly, fatally bewitching! If every new mood and movement had not made her more perversely fascinating than the last! And yet after that speech she went on to say harder things yet.

"Where is Mr. M'Kenzie?" asked the young lady, as Clive made no answer to her rebuke. She never guessed (how should she?) that it was fighting with his love for her which kept him silent. "If you have not quarreled, why has he not come in with you, and why do you look so strange? When you came in you were as white as my dress, and your wrist— Oh! Mr. Clive," and Kate's voice grew sharp and tremulous as alarm again quickened in her pulses; "you are trying to deceive me; but—but you can't deny that something has happened, and when Dick comes in he will be as anxious as I to know what it is."

"But not as ready as you to blame me before he knows what it is," observed Clive. Kate flushed to the temples.

"I am not blaming you," she said; "I asked you a question, that is all; but if you did quarrel, I will say that I think you provoked it; and when Dick—"

"There is no necessity to wait for Dick," said Clive, slowly; "so far from trying to deceive you by excusing myself, I will tell you at once that something has happened. I did provoke Mr. M'Kenzie, and also quarreled with him. He slipped into the water, and, not having a change of dry clothes, has been obliged to remain at the inn this evening, for which he desired me to apologize to you. As to my wrist, I hurt it myself, lifting a heavy weight. Are you satisfied, Miss Bellew?"

"Satisfied!" repeated Kate, rather indignantly; "you quarreled and he—*slipped* into the water! Mr. Clive, I am not a child. Do you mean that you pushed him in? You have said all you could to prejudice us against him: and though I suppose you believed your opinion of him to be the true one—"

"It was not a true one," interrupted Clive. "That is what I wished to tell you when I came in. I did believe certain things against Mr. M'Kenzie, I own it; but now I find I was mistaken, and retract any opinions I may have expressed."

"Then why did you express them?" asked Kate, warmly, and not without a certain irrepressible triumph in her hero's exaltation. "I may be a foolish girl, Mr. Clive, but it seems to me that to blacken another man's character without cause is even worse than quarreling with and striking him. You sneered at me for being frightened; but when two friends go out and only one comes back, in different clothes, with his wrist bandaged, and his face— Look for yourself what is on your face."

And Clive, turning to the little glass over the chimney-board, saw reflected there the red stain which had greeted Kate's eyes on his first entrance.

"By Heavens, it's blood!" he exclaimed, more to himself than the young lady. "How on earth—oh! to be sure, M'Kenzie's head.—Miss Bellew," turning to her

with a hard, constrained smile, "I apologize for my sneer. You had cause to be frightened, though I was not aware of it."

Kate shrank away from him, hardly caring to conceal her repugnance; but before she could speak, the door was flung open, and the room filled with a perfect clamor of voices.

"Hullo, Kate! no tea yet?"

"Oh, Katie! it's been such a stupid long sermon. I thought the old buffer would never have done."

"George put a pin in an old woman's leg, Katie."

"Well, she would fall asleep and wobble her head in a disgusting black poke-bonnet on my shoulder; and I wasn't going to stand it; so there!"

"Why, Clive, old fellow, what the deuce are you looking so glum for? I've been hearing no end of gossip about you. Report says you and M'Kenzie have slain each other, and been carried into the inn to have an inquest held on you. I go to the 'Red Lion,' top speed, and find M'Kenzie imbibing very excellent hot grog, in bed, with his head tied up, from a tumble off the cliffs; and full of your prowess in scrambling after him and helping to haul him on to *terra firma* again." This from Dick, drowning the children's clatter.

"Not much prowess about it," said Clive, quietly; "ask Miss Bellew, she knows the whole story."

And Kate turned from him, and began to pour out the tea, trembling with indignation. So he could afford to brave her under shelter of M'Kenzie's generosity; and she might not even ask whether the latter were seriously hurt, for fear of drawing on herself a fresh sting of sarcasm!

She hardly opened her lips during the remainder of the evening.

CHAPTER XXVI.

CLIVE GETS HIS CONGÉ.

A BRIGHT, fresh morning, and Kate sitting on the beach reading a letter. Above her head big, fleecy, white clouds driving one over another, like gigantic snow-flakes across a sky of clear, brilliant blue. In front, the sea, a darker blue, capped with foam, sparkling and frothing in a very whirlpool of bubble, glitter and spray from the tips of her little toes to the boundary line of the far blue horizon. Behind, the red roofs of the village, new washed in last night's rain, glowing like honest faces in the sunshine, and giving warmth and body to the blue-green coloring of the surroundings. Linen hanging out to dry in a white flutter on the gooseberry-bushes in the cottage gardens at the back. May-trees, all a wilderness of bloom, filling the air with perfume. Dottie digging holes in the sand at a little distance. Kate, with her striped petticoats tucked well under her to prevent the wind making free with them, and her hat on the back of her head, trying to be interested in Bee Vanborough's six pages of closely-written epistle, and not feel sulky because Dick had gone to breakfast at the inn, and had stayed there instead of bringing his friends back to the cottage. George and Madgie—somewhere!—not being audible, probably in mischief.

"Good morning, Miss Bellew."

Kate turned round, dropping her letters, and looking up with a smile of expectation. True, it was Clive's voice which spoke; but she never dreamed but that he

was accompanied by the others; and though her face fell to quite disproportionate length on discovering that he was alone, he had stooped to pick up the scattered sheets of paper, and did not see the change.

"Good morning," she said, with cool civility. "Oh, thank you. Pray don't take the trouble" (as the wind blew away one of the pages, and he went after it). "Is Dick with you?" She was on her guard this morning, and would not be the first to mention the other's name.

"No," said Clive. "He bade me tell you he would not be in till lunch. I have another message for you—from M'Kenzie."

"How dare he speak of him after last night!" thought Kate. "A message!" she repeated, aloud. "What is it?" but her voice failed a little; for, unless he were not coming himself, what need to send a message?

"It was to bid you good-bye," said Clive, quietly, his eyes reading her face as if to note the disappointment she was determined not to show. "He begged me to tell you that he was summoned up to town too early this morning to make his adieu in person, and that he hoped you would confide George to my care when I leave this evening. He did not like to carry off the little fellow in such a hurry."

"I do not think there is any need for George to go away again," said Kate, more deeply offended than she would have cared to own even to herself. "Mrs. Dobson has managed to make him up a little bed, and— Oh, no! I am sure my mother would prefer his being with us when there is no absolute necessity for trespassing on other people's kindness."

She spoke more haughtily than she knew; but, indeed, her poor little heart was swelling with wounded feeling, of which M'Kenzie was the cause—not Clive. What had she done, that all of a sudden he should avoid her and return to town without even bidding her good-bye? It was very generous and magnanimous of him to defend and excuse his defamer; but he need not make common cause with the latter, and use his enemy as a messenger to his friend. What *had* she done? Nothing that she

could think of. Had she failed in any kindness to him? Most certainly not. If she had erred at all, it was the other way, and the other man who ought to have left her in offense; or was it—but no! such a thought could never have entered his mind. Clive—no, not even Clive, hateful as he was, could ever have been so cowardly, so cruel and ungenerous as to hint to him, what he had already hinted to her, that she cared for him more than was maidenly to care for a man who had never given her reason to consider him anything more than a friend. Oh, no! it was too horrible an idea. She would not even suffer it in her mind, or fancy for one moment that it had influenced his; but it sent the blood burning into her cheeks, and roused every bit of pride in her nature, to hide away any spark of feeling or concern at the Canadian's departure from the man who had been his enemy, and whom she considered hers.

"Mamma will write and thank Mr. M'Kenzie for his kindness," she said, more frigidly than before. Poor little Kate! She little knew how that very frigidity betrayed her as being so different from her usual manner. "I dare say he will be very glad to be relieved of the burden."

"Oh dear, no! I don't think he considered it a burden at all, but rather a very pleasant trust," said Clive, good-naturedly. "However, if you really prefer to keep George here—"

"Mrs. Dobson has found a bed for him," repeated Kate, and then she stood up. "Shall we go into the house? I will call Dottie first. She has not seen you."

"Don't call her just yet," said Clive, hurriedly—"that is, if you don't mind staying out a little longer. I have something more to say to you."

"From Mr. M'Kenzie, also?" asked Kate, very carelessly, though her pulses thrilled with eagerness to know what it was. "But you can say it as we walk along."

"I would rather say it here, if you don't object," said Clive, "and it is not from Mr. M'Kenzie, but myself."

Kate's eagerness died on the instant. She sat down on a stone, because the wind would blow her hair into her eyes, and twist her clothes round her like a rope, like

the damsels in Hablot Browne's seaside sketches; and she could feel more dignified and at her ease when not embarrassed by flapping drapery and blinding curls.

"*Another* quarrel, I suppose!" she said to herself, with an involuntary shrug of her shoulders.

"Well, Mr. Clive?" (this aloud.)

"Kate, will you be my wife?"

Off went Kate's hat. She had been trying to keep it on her head; but this was too much for her. Her hands dropped upon her lap, and the hat flew off, and, after executing a wild gambol on the beach, lodged in a pool of water between a couple of huge stones. No one noticed it.

"MR. CLIVE!" she said, indignantly.

"Are you surprised?" said Clive, smiling a little. If he was nervous he did not show it. "I dare say that is not the proper way of asking; but, Kate, I ought to have told you first that I love you. I have loved you for some time back, and—"

"Are you laughing at me?" cried Kate, with scarlet cheeks and flashing eyes. "Mr. Clive, this is not a subject for a joke. You forget yourself."

"I don't mean it for a joke," said Clive, quietly. "I should be forgetting myself indeed if I did. Yes, I dare say you are surprised. I was, myself, when I first found it out; and I don't mind telling you I fought against it with all my might, for you have not been very kind to me, and"—with another smile—"you are not perfect, you know, Kate." (Kate gave a little, wrathful jump, and the fingers of her right hand doubled convulsively; but some feelings cannot be expressed in words.) "You are not even at all like the ideal which I—like most men, I expect—had of my future wife; but I suppose you were more bewitching than my ideal. At any rate, you've bewitched me; for I do love you, honestly and truly, better than I think I should ever have loved her even if I had met her, better than I have ever loved any woman yet—barring my mother."

"If you are not joking, you mean to insult me. Is this your revenge, Mr. Clive?" cried Kate, springing to

her feet, but promptly sitting down again, because the wind as promptly made a balloon of her skirts.

"Revenge! What for?" said Clive. "Oh!"—with rather a scornful smile, "our quarrel last night, you mean! Well, you were unjust, and you hurt me. I had come to the house meaning to tell you what I have told you now; and you greeted me by calling me a murderer. Rather hard lines for any man, you'll allow yourself; but as to revenge, and on a girl too! You were laughing when you said that. And, indeed, after I left you I remembered that you were but a child after all, and that my appearance, combined with the cock-and-bull story you had heard, was sufficient to frighten you, and set your little head running on murders and the like. I was angry with you for being unjust to me; but it was more unjust of me to be angry when I should have recollected what a child you were."

"I am *nineteen*," said Kate, with an emphasis which would have been imposing if she had said nine-and-thirty—"If you call that a child!"—

"Nineteen?" repeated Clive. "Only that! Poor little thing; and I expected you to have the reason and common sense of a man. Nineteen! Why, I was a fool to be offended with you. No wonder you've thought me hard; but, Kate, I do love you; and, God helping me, I'll be a good husband to you, if you'll only try to love me, and be my wife."

He had bent down and taken her two hands in his as he spoke; but Kate snatched them away with a promptitude and look which showed that if she could have boxed his ears with them, she would.

"I—never—was—so insulted in my life," she panted, breathlessly.

"Insulted!" echoed Clive, opening his eyes. "Do you call a man asking you to be his wife, insulting you?"

"Yes, I do," answered Kate, hotly, "when that man is—is you. Yes, Mr. Clive, you may look at me if you like; but it is an insult. Why, you have never said a civil word or done a civil action for me in your life. You have hardly ever listened to me without a contradiction,

or looked at me without a sneer. From the very first day you came to our house, you have seemed to take a pleasure in showing me how cheap you held me, and how little you cared for my good opinion, or the reverse. You have been rude to me at home, and impertinent to me here. You have quarreled with my friends, and done everything you could to make me dislike you; and then—*then* you have the courage to come to me and say, ‘Will you be my wife?’ No, Mr. Clive, I will not; and you know it perfectly well—as well as you know that your asking me is what I call it—an insult.”

“Then that is your answer?” said Clive, so quietly it seemed more as if he were speaking to himself. “Well, I might have known; for after all I was right, and he wrong.”

“I don’t know who *‘he’* is,” said Kate, coloring very much, as for the first time some flash of thought connected Clive’s proposal with M’Kenzie’s departure, “but it is you, certainly, who have been wrong.”

“In allowing myself to love you?” said Clive. “Yes, I suppose so. I told you I struggled against it.”

“It is a pity you gave in,” cried Kate, with a scornful toss of her lovely little head, round which the wavy brown locks were blowing out in the breeze like those of a young Diana. “Love! I don’t think you know what it is, when you don’t think the object of it worth even liking. You call me a child, and you talk of my faults; but, Mr. Clive, I am not a child. I am nineteen, and a woman; and I have a right to be treated with courtesy and deference, like other women. You may be able to love people whom you dislike, despise, and ridicule as you do me; but I am not. I could never love any one whom I did not think more—much more of than I do of myself. You ask me to be your *wife*! and you have never even tried to win me for a friend. I would have been your friend, for Dick’s sake, if you had wanted it; I would never be your wife. Mr. Clive, if a woman is worth taking, she is certainly worth winning; and you, at any rate, have never tried to win me.”

“If you mean that I have not talked a heap of non-

sensical flattery to you and quoted poetry—" began Clive ; but Kate was in a passion, and interrupted him.

"I don't mean that. I mean that you have treated me like a baby, or a toy, to be laughed at, played with, or flung on one side, just as you in your superior lordship think fit. There are other men like you who do so, and go about in a grand 'haw, haw' way among ladies, until they think they have cowed us into proper awe and admiration, and all the time we are laughing—oh! you can't think how we laugh at you among ourselves: and when you deign to fall in love with us, as you call it, and show us that you think we are so frantic to get married that we will even accept you after all this, we are glad—yes, Mr. Clive, *glad!*—to tell you that we would rather marry the poorest and plainest man living. Marry!" cried Kate, with flaming cheeks and clasped hands; "why, if it came to that, I would rather be even an—*an old maid!* yes, much rather."

"Have you done?" said Clive, with a pale, angry smile, and a voice whose forced coolness was a marked contrast to the impetuous outburst which had preceded it. "If so, allow me to bid you good morning, and to assure you that since your preference turns to old-maidhood, I think you are quite certain to achieve it by simply repeating the tirade with which you have favored me to the next man who pays you the greatest proof of respect in his power, by trusting his honor to your hands, and asking you to be his wife. I need hardly say how deeply I regret having done so. Good-bye."

He lifted his hat as he spoke, and turned away; but at this moment Dottie, having suddenly caught sight of him, threw down her spade, and came running up to claim his companionship. Kate tried to detain her, and Clive walked on fast, pretending not to hear his name shouted behind him; but Dottie was not to be baffled, and pursued him as fast as her short legs would carry her, until at last he turned round, and caught her up in his arms, asking what she wanted.

"Me—wants—oo," cried Dottie, panting very much, and bringing out her words in little apoplectic jerks.

"Tum and play wis me. Do, Misser Kive, an' mate cat's-cwaddles, will oo?"

"Not to-day, Dottie: I can't. I'm going away to London," said Clive, so gravely that Dottie linked her fat hands behind his neck, and looked inclined to whimper.

"Don't do away to Lonnon; me wants oo to 'top here wis me," she said, plaintively.

"Do you, little lassie? I'm afraid you're in the minority in that wish," said Clive, smiling, but speaking rather huskily still. "But I can't stay, anyhow; so kiss me, Dottie, like a good little girl, will you? and say good-bye."

"Dood-bye," said Dottie, whimpering, and giving him the required kiss very heartily. "Tum back quick, Misser Kive—do tum back quick;" and then she ran away to tell Kate that "poor Misser Kive had to do all ze way to Lonnon, an' wouldn't she tell him to tum back quick."

Kate scolded her a little, telling her that it was very naughty of little girls to run after gentlemen in that way, and that she didn't think it at all likely that Mr. Clive would *ever* come back—whereat Dottie wept; and Kate walked off in an injured and dignified frame of mind to get her hat. It did not add to the soothing of her peace of mind to see it swollen and soaked in the pool aforementioned, with its pretty blue ribbons all stained and spoiled. She picked it up, gave it an angry little shake, and walked home, holding it in her hand, the fresh sea-breeze blowing over her uncovered head, and taking wild liberties with every frill and ribbon-end of her fluttering draperies.

How dared he insult her so! How *dared* he! To ask her to marry him after making himself so consistently unpleasant to her, and quarreling with M'Kenzie, and all! Why, the enormity of it almost took away her breath, without any help from the wind; and now, to add to it, came another thought: had he not done worse—much worse than merely quarreling with M'Kenzie—had he not driven him away?

She began to think about it, and grew more angry every moment that she thought.

She had been so kind to him when he first arrived—

so kind and cordial, thinking him to be in love with another woman (and, by the way, he must have forgotten Mrs. Grey when he talked of never having cared for any woman as he cared for her), and he had repaid her by quarreling with her at once about her friends, and traducing M'Kenzie, who had not offended him in any way. True, he had been obliged to retract all he said afterwards, but that only proved how false it was, and how true and stainless the calumniated man. Then, when he found he could not shake her faith in her friend, he had quarreled with the latter—a quarrel which she felt convinced had come to far more than ill words, and which, but for M'Kenzie's generosity, might have brought serious consequences on the barrister's head. It was something to have escaped murder (and Kate shivered and grew cold at the thought), but men are punished for less than murder. And then, persisting in the absurdity (and *such* absurdity! Kate repeated) of considering M'Kenzie his rival, and trusting to the latter's magnanimity, he had persuaded him to leave the place without (oh, crowning wrong!) even saying good-bye, and had taken advantage of his freedom to inflict this last impertinence on his too-enduring hostess. How dared he! she said again, as the whole scene rose before her eyes. Talking of her faults, too! and calling her a child! *Child*, indeed! She would like to know what Dick would say when he heard of it. She hoped he would never speak to the hateful man again.

Full of her wrongs, Kate had swept on at a pace decidedly trying to Dottie's shortness of limb and breath, and having now arrived at the cottage, rushed full tilt into the parlor, where Dick was lying on his back on the sofa, a cigarette between his lips, and the *Times* in his hand.

"Dick! Oh, Dick!" cried Kate, shutting the door abruptly, and flying to his side, "what *do* you think has happened? Oh! you will never guess."

"Don't want to," said Dick. "My dear child, I wish you'd be more gentle in your movements. You nearly made me swallow my cigar whole by springing on me."

that way. And where's Clive? Hasn't he come in too?"

"No, he hasn't," said Kate, severely, "and I don't think he will come in very soon. Dick"—and she clasped both hands on his shoulders, to emphasize what she was going to say—"what—do—you—think he has been saying to me?"

"What?" asked Dick, a half-smile showing at the corners of his mouth.

"He asked me to marry him! There!"

"Oh! indeed? He's got over it quicker than I thought"—and Dick laughed. "These lawyer fellows don't waste much time on spooning, to a certainty."

"Dick, you don't mean to say that you knew he was going to—to do it?"

"Well, rather! At least, he spoke to me at breakfast this morning, and I told him to try his chance."

"Oh, Dick!"

"And I hope you behaved properly, and said, 'Yes, thank you,' like a good little girl. You're uncommonly lucky, let me tell you, mademoiselle; for if it had been any one but old Clive who had wanted you, I'm not sure that I'd have been so civil to him."

"Dick!—But, oh! you're joking and you guess what I did tell him, that I thought he was very impertinent, and that I'd never been so insulted in my life."

"Nonsense! You didn't."

"I did, and I told him that I wouldn't marry him if there was not another man in the world; and that I'd rather be an old maid by far, and—"

"You told him *that*?"

"Yes, indeed I did; and I told him that to ask me at all, after being as rude and disagreeable as ever he could be ever since he came to the house, was a direct insult—and so it was, you know. I wonder how he dared, and I told him so."

"You did?" cried Dick, flinging cigar and paper on one side, and jerking Kate's hands off his shoulder as he rose to his feet in a tempest. "Then I'll never speak to you again."

"Dick!" cried his sister, pale with dismay.

"Indeed I won't. What! you went and abused a man like a fish-wife because he had the civility to ask you to marry him! Why, I never heard of such a thing in all my life."

"But Dick—dear Dick—don't be so angry. Mr. Clive has never even been the least pleasant to me, or—"

"Bah! you mean to say that he's never made a fool of himself by simpering at your apron-strings like a great sentimental mooncalf. If that's what you like— Oh! I've no patience with you. To go and treat an honest, sensible fellow like Bernard Clive—*my* best friend, too—in that shameful way, and then to boast of it!—I declare it makes me ashamed to have a sister."

"Oh, Dick!" cried Kate, beginning to cry quite broken-heartedly at this severity, "how c-c-c-cruel you are! I n-n-never thought you would t-take it in that way. Oh! I wish mamma were here."

"I wish she were," retorted her tyrant, austere. "You'd soon hear what she'd say."

"I'm sure mamma would never wish me to marry Mr. Clive," cried Kate, warmly.

"Then you're quite wrong," replied Dick, "for I believe she'd like it very much. She's always praising him, and wishing I were cut out of the same cloth, and that sort of rubbish; and I'm sure she makes as much use of him as if he were her son-in-law already. She'll have to give it up now, and thank you for it. There!"

"Oh, but, Dick," pleaded his sister, with big tears in her eyes, and others running plentifully down her flushed cheeks, as she half sat, half knelt on the floor by the sofa, her hands clasped helplessly over the head of it. "Mamma couldn't wish me to marry any one I don't love; and I don't even like Mr. Clive: he never tried to make me; but perhaps he is different with you, and—"

"Different with me!" echoed Dick, contemptuously. "I should think he was different with me. I can appreciate him; and I've a good right to do so, too. Why, I might be in jail now, but for him. He denies it, of

course, but I'm morally certain he's paying off those confounded debts of mine out of his own earnings; and when I'm going to repay him I don't know: it'll be hard enough to scrape the interest together. As for the principal, I expect he knows very well he won't see it.— And you go and fly in his face, and insult him! Oh! it's too bad. *Like* him, indeed! If you were not so abominably selfish, you would like him, if only for what he's done for me. I'd like to see any other of your fine-spoken lovers doing the same, or one-half of it. Why, good heavens! at this very moment I'm depending on him to get me out of the deucedest scrape I've ever been in, in my life; and after your treatment of course he'll go and throw it all up, and turn his back on me; and I shall have a breach of promise case on my shoulders, and—”

“Dick, he would never do that,” cried Kate, with an instinctive confidence in Clive's loyalty which might have gratified that gentleman to hear. “He would not desert you because— Oh, dear! are you in earnest? Is it anything so dreadful as that?”

“Yes, I am in earnest,” sneered Dick, thoroughly beside himself. “And if you find it less dreadful to have a grocer's daughter for a sister-in-law, you can. I shouldn't mind. Fanny's a deucedly pretty girl, whatever else she is; and if she didn't care about me more than a little, she wouldn't fight for me as she does. She knows very well I haven't a penny to bless myself with.”

“But you couldn't marry!” cried Kate, quite pale with horror. “And a—a grocer's— Oh, Dick! you are frightening me: you are not in earnest. Think of mamma.”

“Think of her yourself,” retorted Dick. “Ha! preaching doesn't always go with practice.”

“I do,” cried Kate, indignantly. “I always think of her. I wouldn't marry any one against mamma's wish, if I cared for him ever so much; but she would never wish me to marry a person I disliked. Oh, Dick! do not talk like that. Mr. Clive will help you in such a case. He would never give it up because I had offended him. He is not so bad as that.”

“Bad!” repeated Dick. “He's a deal too good for a

girl who doesn't know how to value him. 'Help me!' Yes, I dare say he would, if I let him—if I were mean enough to let him, after my sister had insulted him so grossly."

Kate made no answer; she only hid her face and sobbed. It was rather hard on her, for however she might love Dick, and desire to please him, she had not the slightest intention of pleasing Mr. Clive, whom she did not love at all; and there was something very galling to her pride in the thought that her brother, or any of them, should be dependent on his kindness after what had passed. But then that hinted-at alternative was so much more dreadful, it nearly took her breath away even to hear.

"Wouldn't any other lawyer do as well—Mr. Bulby?" she ventured to suggest after a minute or two.

Mr. Bulby was the Lovegoats's solicitor—a very hard, disagreeable sort of man—and Dick only sneered.

Kate hid her face and sobbed again.

"I am very sorry," she said, at last, going up to her brother, and clasping her hands pleadingly on his arm, "but I can't help it now! and, Dick, don't be angry with me—don't, darling. I *couldn't* marry Mr. Clive—indeed I couldn't."

"You couldn't tell him so civilly either, I suppose," retorted Dick, not looking at her, and rather drawing himself out of the soft grasp of those coaxing fingers. "It isn't enough to humiliate a man who pays you the compliment of wanting to make you his wife, but you must taunt him with his rejection. By heavens!—"

"I am very sorry," repeated Kate, with blushing earnestness. "I suppose I was wrong; but he had provoked me, so I got into a passion, and didn't think what I said. If you knew all— But, Dick, dear, it is done now, and can't be undone. I tell you I am sorry. What can I say more?"

"Tell *him* so," said Dick, quickly. "Write him a line, and apologize, and say you hope he won't remember—"

"No, Dick," said Kate, turning scarlet at the mere idea, and receding a step from her brother, "I can't do that. I

don't mind saying anything to you; but Mr. Clive is quite another thing. I could not. You must not even ask me."

"Then I'll never speak to you again," said Dick, "and I'll go up to town to-morrow, and see Fanny, and let her fix the d——d day when she pleases; and I'll let Clive know he needn't do anything further in the matter. You've turned him out of the house, and I'm not going to make use of him! There!"

He waited a moment, and then, finding that Kate would not yield or answer, walked out of the room, and banged the door behind him.

CHAPTER XXVII.

HUMBLING BUT WHOLESOME.

“**D**EAR me, how very, very provoking! Well, I am sorry. If only I were with them! but I did think they couldn't have got into any trouble there.”

It was Lady Margaret who said it. She was sitting in Eve's room, between the bed and the window, with a heap of letters in her lap; while the invalid girl herself was sitting up in bed, wrapped in a shawl, and eating her breakfast.

Eve was getting better, very much so; but she was not yet arrived at the pitch of coming downstairs, and had only lately been promoted to lying on the sofa in her mother's room during part of the day. Even that was not to be attempted till she had had her breakfast, and a rest afterwards; and, indeed, she looked as if she wanted both. What with her eyes, which, always light, seemed to have lost in color what they had gained in size, her thin, white face and spectre-like little hands toying languidly with the egg-spoon, as though it were almost too heavy to manage, she looked very like a reanimated spectre, and very unlike her three blooming, bright-eyed sisters at Combe Regis. Lady Margaret's exclamation, uttered in a tone of mingled woe and worry, startled her into dropping the spoon. It fell on the sheet, making a yellow stain; and there was a fund of nervous irritation in the girl's voice as she asked:

“What's happened now, mamma? Oh, Dick in some scrape, of course. I see his handwriting; and isn't that from Kate? What has she to say?”

"It is not Dick, and don't say 'of course,' dear, as if he were always in fault, poor boy!" said Lady Margaret, rebukingly. "He has only written to tell me of it, and so has Kate. Dear, dear! I am worried. It is well Miss Smith returns to-morrow; though how she is to be stowed away there— Well, I thought Katie would have managed better."

"What is it? and what has Kate done? Do give me the letter, mamma. I hate to hear little disjointed bits of a thing," cried Eve, stretching out one of the skeleton claws aforesaid with an impatience which would have offended many a stricter parent. Lady Margaret, however, was not given to taking offense. Her children all ruled her, more or less; but the one she was with for the time being was, of course, the *rex de facto*; and though Lady Margaret retained the letter in her own hand, she did not resent the order to give it up.

"I can't show it to you, love, because Katie has put 'private' on it," she said, apologetically. "And, indeed, such things are better not talked about."

"But you are talking about it," cried Eve, more fretfully than before. "And as to Katie's putting 'private,' she would tell me in a moment if she were here. She never had a secret of her own in her life. I don't think she could keep one if she tried. Do make haste and tell me about it, mother. Has any one proposed to her? I suppose so. Who is it? The curate, I suppose. She said she hadn't seen a man in the village except the vicar and his curate."

"Meaning gentlemen," put in Lady Margaret. "But it is not the curate. It is—a friend of ours. I won't mention his name, for of course he wouldn't like it bruited about; and, indeed, he has not been well treated as it is. It is that which vexes me so much: a friend that one is really indebted to, and depends on! It is a great pity," and Lady Margaret sighed woefully. She had been making a sort of right hand of Clive in virtue of that distant connectionship of his with the Bellews, and had spared herself thus from more than one unpleasant interview with the hard-faced Mr. Bulby. And

then he was such a good friend for Dick. It was too bad that it should all come to an end this way.

"A friend we are indebted to," repeated Eve, keenly. "Do you mean Mr. M'Kenzie, for taking care of George? But Kate likes him. I know she does. How has she treated him badly?"

"No, I didn't mean Mr. M'Kenzie," said Lady Margaret; "though indeed, now you suggest it, I shouldn't wonder if he too— Dear me! Could that have been what they quarreled about? Kate says Bernard Clive was so jealous and disagreeable, and as they did quarrel—"

"Bernard Clive!" cried Eve, pushing aside her tray, and leaning forward in the excitement of the moment. "You don't mean to say he wants to marry Kate! Has she refused him? Whatever could he have been thinking of? Why, she could no more appreciate him than fly. Oh, mamma! do make haste and give me the letter. It is so tantalizing of you to go on in this way."

And then Lady Margaret, not having strength to resist longer, did tell Eve the whole story as gathered from the rather contradictory letters of her son and daughter. She did not give up the letters, because of "private" being on them; but she told all that they contained, and read bits from them aloud every here and there, which would probably have come to much the same thing in the writers' estimation. If Kate could not keep a secret, assuredly she had inherited the disability from her mother. Eve listened eagerly, then broke in:

"But, mamma, I don't understand. What is Mr. M'Kenzie doing there?"

"He is not there now, Eve; he left before Bernard Clive."

"But what was he doing there?"

"He took George down to see them. Don't you remember Kate writing about it, and saying how kind it was of him to humor George when he saw him moping, poor child?"

"Yes, I remember; but I never thought he had stayed there. Mamma, I don't think Kate has behaved at all well."

"I'm afraid she has been a tiny bit imprudent, and not quite as careful of the poor fellow's feelings as she might have been," said Lady Margaret, gently. "It is a great pity they were there at the same time, and with no older person. If only Miss Smith—"

"Do you think they would mind Miss Smith?" Eve put in, "or that they would have stayed there unless Kate wished it? She is never happy unless she is flirting, and making people wretched."

"My darling, you must not be so severe. I don't think poor Katie has the least intention of flirting; but if people will admire her—and then she is so young—not yet twenty!"

"I am not yet sixteen," said Eve, shutting up her pale little lips rigidly, "but I'm sure I wouldn't take advantage of being trusted alone, to have two gentlemen there, and flirt with them, and make them quarrel with one another, and then, when she's got one to propose, laugh at and be rude to him—"

"Oh! Eve, my dear child, don't talk in that dreadful way," cried Lady Margaret, walking up and down, her cap all awry, and her forehead puckered up, in great distress. "I can't bear to hear of such thoughts coming into your head. But there! it is only because you are ill and weak, my poor child. I oughtn't to have talked to you of this. Lie down and rest, while I go and write to Kate."

"What will you say to her?" asked Eve, unheeding the first part of the sentence. "Mamma, I think Dick is quite, quite right. She ought to apologize. He is very silly generally, but he is right in that. If she does not, Mr. Clive will never come near us again. Dick will be very cross if he loses his companion through Miss Katie's flirting; and he says that unless she apologizes—"

"I am going to write to her now. Dear Evey, do rest," Lady Margaret said, and went away to her desk, as if in half fear that Eve would write the letter for her if she were not prompt about it. She had taken Kate's part with her second daughter; but, all the same, the latter's reprobation had not been without effect on her plastic.

mind; and the letter, when written, was by no means so sympathetic and healing as Kate had expected.

Poor Kate! she had held out two days in spite of Dick's stubborn adherence to his threat, but she was desperately unhappy at so doing. I don't think she really detested a little quarrel now and then, even with a friend, so it was a good stand-up fight of words, which let off steam for the time being, and entailed a more loving reconciliation afterwards; but to live in ill-will with any one was quite a different thing, and to live in ill-will with *Dick*!—Oh! it was too dreadful. When she had gone to kiss him on that night, he had turned away his head, and given her a little push with his elbow; and Kate had to retreat with brimming eyes and a heart too wounded to attempt any further salute than a timid "Good morning" on the following day. To this she only got a grunt for answer, and Dick did not open his lips to her once. He went out immediately after breakfast, and stayed out all day, and only came back at past midnight, smelling strongly of tobacco and—worse.

And now came Lady Margaret's letter, plaintively rebuking, deploring the breach with Clive, regretting M'Kenzie's visit, intimating that Kate must have been indiscreet, even while excusing her indiscretion on the score of her being such a child (Clive's very plea!)—wishing that there were any means of softening the latter's rejection; and urging that if his manner had been wanting in suavity, the fact of his love for her ought to have pleaded as an excuse.

All this seemed very hard to Kate, more especially as her own conscience was quite sharp enough with her, without requiring any accusing tongues to prompt it. She knew that she had not flirted; that she had, on the contrary, tried to behave with extra discretion and prudence; and therefore her mother's gently regretful surmises to the contrary did not so much afflict her; but when she looked back at that scene on the sea-shore her cheeks tingled, and she did wish that it had not taken place. It was very nice to snub Mr. Clive at the time, and punish his presumption by putting him down so severely that he

would never be tempted to presume again ; but now that the heat of contest was over, and the triumph of victory dead, she did begin to ask herself, had she not been a little unfeminine and wanting in gentleness ? and might it not be possible that, instead of asserting her dignity and title to respect in Clive's eyes, she had, on the contrary, pushed them down lower than they were before ?

As every one capable of understanding a young lady's feelings at all can easily comprehend how horrible this idea was, bringing cold shivers over every inch of Kate's sensitive skin, I need say nothing more about that part of the subject.

And Dottie loved him, and wailed when told that he was not to come back and "play wis her."

And Dick valued him so much that he would not even forgive, or speak to her, for her treatment of his friend.

What could she do but yield ?

She had been proud and triumphant in speaking her mind to Clive, and punishing him ; but the punishment that had fallen upon her in return was so severe that unconsciously she began to pity her own victim, and regret her own victory.

On the morning of the third day she came up to Dick just as he was going out, and gave him a letter—unsealed.

"Will you post it ?" she said. "I have written to Mr. Clive, and told him that"—a great gulp, as if the words were too hard to bring forth—"that I am sorry I was"—another gulp, and the cheeks burning—"so harsh in answering him ; and—that—but you can read it for yourself," and then she dashed out into the garden, and had a good thunder-shower cry of real mortification and humbled pride.

Dick opened the letter at once, and with a smile of great satisfaction. He had not in the least expected Kate to give way, and was the more angry with her because he did not know how to come down off his own high horse without compromise to his dignity. "She has changed her mind, and wants to have him back. She'd never have done it otherwise," was his immediate idea : his own

mind not being even able to graze the outside shell of his sister's.

The contents of the note undeceived him.

"DEAR MR. CLIVE" (it said),—"Since I parted from you the other day, I have thought that I was, perhaps, hastier and less courteous in my way of answering you than I should have been. I ought to have told you that, though I could not do as you wished, I thanked you for wishing it; but I was irritated and forgot myself. Will you please forget it also, and believe that I understand your good will in making me the offer you did, and am sorry for having spoken scornfully of it. I should be more sorry if any misunderstandings between us were to diminish your friendship for my brother, or prevent your coming to us as freely as before.

"I am, very truly yours,

"KATHERINE BELLEW.

"To BERNARD CLIVE, Esq.,

"4, Church Pont Chambers, Temple."

Clive was hard at work in the above-mentioned chambers when Kate's note was given to him; and as, according to habit, he glanced first at the signature, his heart did assuredly beat much faster than was its wont. I don't think that Dick's idea came into his head; Kate's language on the beach having been far too forcible for such a hope; but he did think something out-of-the-way had happened, to bring him a letter from the young lady who had dismissed him with so much contumely: and I doubt what Kate would have thought of the softened look which came over his face, a minute back so hard and worn-looking, as he read the little note whose very caligraphy told of the writer's difficulty in putting her repentance on paper.

"Poor, dear little girl! Who would have thought it of her!" he said, half aloud, and then he put the paper where Kate's dimpled hand had rested to his lips.

Kindness is sometimes rather cruel.

When Clive left Kate on the beach, the sharpness of her words had almost turned his love to hatred; and yet as he went away from her the question would force itself

upon him—was there not something in them after all; and had he not laid himself open to her accusations by the manner in which he had gone about his wooing?

Perfectly honest and upright himself, he had from the first entertained an instinctive confidence in the outspoken truth and honesty of Kate Bellew. What she said he knew he might believe in; and, therefore, when she spoke her mind to him on the sands at Combe Regis, he not only believed that what she said she did mean, but that *in* what she said there must be truth. He had wronged M'Kenzie; that was true. He had desired to break off the intimacy between that gentleman and the Bellews when he thought the former unworthy of it; that was also true. Might he not have wronged Kate as well in not treating her with due consideration and deference?

Yes, it was possible that she might be right in much that she had said, but—and there was the sting—the fact of her saying it made her wrong. It was unladylike, ungentle, worse—unwomanly; and on him, whose ideal of woman was something essentially gentle, ladylike and feminine, it grated like the ragged edge of a knife upon the naked flesh. However strong and clever a woman may be, no man likes her to show her strength and cleverness at *his* expense. She may be strong in upholding his honor, and clever in appreciating himself, but the less she is even aware of these powers, the more lovable she will be. It is better that, like Ruth of old, she should say, "Why have I found grace in thine eyes?" than count up her own graces and exalt them as superior to his own. They *should* be superior—there is no doubt of that—in purity, sweetness, and unselfishness; but (and this is after all a woman's chief merit) she should think them inferior, and, in mind as well as will, subject herself with due meekness to the monarch of creation.

Kate had broken through this unwritten code of humanity, and asserted her "rights." Clive acknowledged them, but in so doing, his love for her dried up and withered for the time, as a plant will do beneath an August sun. A unicorn is a very magnificent animal, but one doesn't care to take it in one's arms and fondle it. Clive

felt no disposition to take Kate in his arms after he had once seen her, as it were, prancing in defiance and scorn of his leonine self.

And now her letter had come, not unsaying what she had said, not retracting anything from her decision, rather confirming and strengthening it; but owning her error with the frank simplicity of a child, and asking his pardon with the franker grace of a woman. Cold and stiff as the words might seem, he read her nature in them better than he had ever done before, a nature so variable and yet so true, so faulty and yet so ready to acknowledge its faults.

Kate's kindness had indeed been cruel, and it was some hours before he could command himself sufficiently to answer it. When he did so, however, his letter betrayed little of the tempest which had preceded it.

"MY DEAR MISS BELLEW,—I thank you very heartily for your note. You have shown me how frank and generous a woman can be, and I shall not forget the lesson. I do not dispute the truth of anything that you said in our last interview; and yet I am grateful to you for regretting it, because it proves to me that my love, however fruitless, was not thrown away without good and worthy cause. I can only ask you in conclusion to forgive my harshness of speech, with all else that has offended you, and to believe that if I can be of any use to you or yours, I shall be glad if you will consider me

"Your sincere Friend,

"BERNARD CLIVE.

"To Miss Bellow,

"Bloom Cottage, Combe Regis."

"He is as proud as—I never saw any man so proud," said Kate, to herself. "Every word shows that, and yet— Well, I'm not sorry I wrote. Dick has forgiven me, at any rate, and it is so much pleasanter to be good friends with people."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

KATE ASKS ADVICE.

MRS. GREY was sitting in a large chintz-covered arm-chair near the window, her head turned back against the cushions, her hands lying wearily over some piece of plain sewing in her lap. The evening light fell across the lattice panes, and threw a checkered yellow glow upon the pale beautiful face over which sorrow and sickness were slowly weaving a mortal cloud. She did not even open her eyes to greet the kiss of the sunbeams as they flickered through the green-gold tapestry of vine-leaves at the window; or see how one red slanting beam had illumined with a living glory her picture, which stood finished upon the easel before her. She was weary, utterly spent and weary, dying of loneliness and starvation—that worst starvation of the heart; and within that heart was only one prayer and one hope, that so forcibly expressed by the Psalmist:

“Reproach hath broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; and I looked for some to take pity on me, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none.”

She had now been at the farmhouse for three weeks, and to her feelings it might have been three years, or even more; and perhaps the mild gleam of excitement created by Kate's appearance and visit had made her doubly sensible of the subsequent blank. At first the young girl's lively interest in, and admiration of, her sketch, had spurred her to taking more interest in it herself. She had worked at it hard during the three days after Kate's visit, sitting

at it till the dusk of twilight rendered longer painting impracticable; and it was now completed; but the last evening had been very damp, and she, being only recently recovered from the nervous illness which had followed on her departure from Lady Vanborough's, caught a severe feverish cold, which again confined her to her room, and left her almost as weak as a child.

If Kate had come then, how welcome she would have been! But Kate was otherwise occupied, and had no time to spare for thinking of the lonely inmate of that homely farmhouse.

The little farmhouse maid waited on the invalid very civilly. The farmer's wife looked in morning and evening to hope as "her wur doin' noicely like;" and now and then the farmer's baby toddled to the door, finger in mouth, to gaze with wide-open wondering eyes at the poor sick lady with the pretty hair, and whose face always melted into such a longing, loving smile, when his round and ruddy one appeared in the doorway. Once or twice Mrs. Grey had coaxed him in, and, by means of "sweeties," installed him on her knee, where he sat in huge content till, taking sudden alarm at the unwonted amount of kissing and fondling bestowed upon him, his fat under lip was protruded in most portentous fashion, his small face puckered itself up; and he was swiftly removed by the little maid, in fear of one of those direful roars which, once evoked, are by no means so easy to still. Mrs. Grey would fain have kept him with her, roar or no, and soothed him into happiness again with more sweeties; but the little maid was decided on the subject, and Enoch Stebbings was forcibly evicted, and seen no more for the day.

If only he had been her own, to hold and kiss and keep with her against all the world! If even she had had the remembrance of such a child to cherish in her heart of hearts, and know was hers still in heaven, though God, in that inscrutable wisdom which is so hard, so pitifully hard, to fathom on earth, had seen fit to take it from her for awhile! To many women it would have seemed better never to have had a thing than to have been robbed of it,

to have given up the transient pleasure rather than suffer the after-pain. It had been so with Mrs. Grey in the days of her health. She had even thanked God that she was childless, as for a great mercy, and shivered to think what the life of any child of hers might have been. It was not so now. When the bodily health is strong and firm, the mind may well be firm and strong also; but pain and sickness had shivered that calm gentleness and patience which had withstood so many an onslaught from without; and with the new sense of weakness came a great yearning to have some one at her side, something of her own to love and be loved by.

"'Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all."

It has come to a sad pass when a woman sits and craves for even the shadow of a past love; for the little knitted boot telling of the baby-feet that had once pattered at her side; the lock of hair which once grew on a strong man's head—lock which has often mingled with her own, when it rested on her shoulder, in the buried days of old.

Mrs. Grey had no such relics. The baby-boot had never been needed. The lock of hair had been burned long ago with the stern determination of duty—the duty to forget.

"How do you do? and may I come in?"

With a quick, nervous start, strongly suggestive of her weakened nerves, the invalid opened her eyes, and saw at the window, framed in green vine-leaves, and relieved against the golden sky, a fair young face, with sweet, red lips parted in a smile, half saucy and half shy, with rounded, glowing cheeks, and eyes sweeter and more glowing than lips or cheeks, smiling in at her from under the shadow of a broad straw hat, and over the pots of scarlet-blossomed geraniums which lined the window-sill.

"Are you at home?" asked Kate, resting her round white chin on the broad geranium-leaves, and smiling in happy confidence of not being said "No" to. Clive's letter had unconsciously rehabilitated her in that pleasant

position from which she had been so rudely ousted by Clive's words.

"How ill you are looking! You have been worse, much worse, I'm sure; and, oh, what a wretch I am!"

"Yes, I have been worse," said Mrs. Grey, smiling too, but with that soft gentle smile which had less of gladness than sweetness in it. "But I don't know what that has to do with your being a wretch. Come in and tell me what makes you call yourself one. It is very kind of you to come so far to see me," she added, when Kate had obeyed. "Do you know I was thinking of you a great deal this morning, and wondering if I should ever see you again."

"I should think you were wondering!" retorted Kate, with a sort of comic remorse. "Ten days—nearly a fortnight—isn't it? And I was to have come back in a day or two to see the picture finished! What a horrid, neglectful, promise-breaking sort of person you must think me!"

"On the contrary, I think you a very nice little person," said Mrs. Grey, smiling. Kate's sunshiny presence had swept the clouds out of her mind like breath from a glass.

"It is very good of you to come and see me at all. And as to the picture, there it is, ready for your inspection. What do you think of it?"

"I?" said Kate, drawing back from the canvas over which she had been stooping, and putting her head on one side to view it *à l'artiste*. "Why, I'll tell you. I think you are some grand painter come down here incognito. And, by the way, are you aware that you haven't told me your name yet?"

She turned round as she spoke, fixing her bright, frank eyes in innocent inquiry on Mrs. Grey's face; and over the transparent whiteness of the latter crept a faint dull flush.

"If only I could tell her truly," was the painful thought hidden in a moment's hesitation, and then came the answer:

"Clewer—Edith Clewer."

"'Miss or Mrs.?' (Quotation from Wilkie Collins—

ahem!") laughed Kate. "Don't you feel as if you were saying your catechism—'M or N, as the case may be?' but you see one must know how to call you."

"Mrs.," said Mrs. Grey, quietly.

"Thank you," said Kate. "I hardly needed to ask that, though; for I had somehow so taken it for granted that I never thought of looking at your left hand. Of course," with a merry laugh, "Mrs. Clewer is only a fictitious title!"

"Only a—I don't know what you mean," but as she spoke the widow's transient color faded out into a deader white than before; and Kate grew carnation crimson under the stern look in her eyes.

"I beg your pardon," she said, impulsively. "Don't be vexed with me, for I was only joking; but don't you know how authors take *noms de plume*? and I thought if you were a swell artist you might only condescend to give us your *nom de*—what's the name for paint-brush? but it was only in fun. I *hope* you are not vexed," the last words said so earnestly that Mrs. Grey put out her hand with a smile at once reassuring and reassured.

"Vexed! No," she said. "Why should you think it?"

"You looked as if you were."

"Don't pay heed to my looks then. An invalid is not accountable for them. Tell me instead what the world has been doing with you all this while."

"Just what I'm going to do," said Kate, briskly; "that is, to show you why I haven't been here. But, besides, I want to ask your advice dreadfully; only it is so difficult to know where to begin."

"Try the beginning," suggested Mrs. Grey, pleasantly. "When I saw you last you had a sister dangerously ill, and—"

"Oh! well, she's getting all right now. Mamma has taken her down to Eastbourne, and as soon as the doctor says it is quite safe we are going to join them. She took the turn on the day I had intended coming to see you again, only I was prevented by Mr. M'—by a person coming to see us."

Kate stopped here to swallow a great annoying blush,

which would somehow creep all over her pretty face and throat; and Mrs. Grey smiled.

"Well?" she said.

"The—the person—a friend of ours, stayed for three or four days," Kate went on, with extra dignity, to compensate for the blush which declined to go away. "He came all the way from London, you see; so he wanted a rest; and indeed his visit was not so much to us, as to please my little brother, who was staying with him, and had got homesick for a sight of us. Don't you think it was very kind of him to humor the boy?"

"Very kind," said Mrs. Grey, smiling still.

"I like to see grown-up people fond of dogs and children. It is a good trait, I think," said Kate, solemnly.

Mrs. Grey acquiesced.

"And of course, though it gave me a good deal to do, it was very pleasant to have George back with us. George is my brother," added Kate, quickly, as anxious to show that the visitor had nothing to do with her pleasure.

Mrs. Grey nodded.

"And then Mr. Clive came. You know him—about him, I mean?"

"In connection with—with Mrs. Grey," put in the invalid, not coloring, but with evident distress. "But you don't mean to say that he is—here!"

"*Here!*"—opening big brown eyes of horror—"Oh, dear! no; of course not. He went away directly afterwards—I mean"—with some confusion—"he only stayed two days."

The anxious look faded out of Mrs. Grey's face, and she breathed freely.

"Not a very long visit," she said, with well-bred ignorance of Kate's slip of the tongue.

"That depends," answered the girl, petulantly. "It may be two days too long if people don't get on well together. But there! I'm not going to blame *him*," she added, with some remorse. "I do believe he means well, and that it is only his way. Besides, I was wrong myself; but it is so unpleasant when one visitor makes himself disagreeable to another, and for no reason at all.

Mr. M'—the other person, is so different, so gentle and pleasant, and not a bit like the young men about town. I get very tired of London young men, do you know," said Kate, with a sigh of middle-aged weariness for the follies of youth. "They are so—so frightfully same and idealess. If only one of them would *try* to pronounce his *r*'s, and care a little about *anything*, it would be a relief; but when it's 'bad form' to talk, or look, or act among women as if you were anything but a rag doll stuffed with sawdust—well, one can't help feeling it's pleasant to meet a person who has something in him, and doesn't mind showing it."

"Very pleasant," said Mrs. Grey, smiling, and stroking the pretty hand which rested on the arm of her chair, as one might stroke a kitten's back, half unconsciously; "but, do you know, I think Bernard Clive has a great deal in him. At least"—recollecting herself—"I have always heard so."

"Exactly *why* I dislike him," retorted Kate. "Yes"—in answer to a mild look of wonder in the blue eyes facing her—"for if a person *is* a rag doll stuffed with sawdust he can't help it; but to know that a man is clever and sensible, but that he doesn't think it worth while to throw away either quality on you, except to snub you, because you're only a girl—well, girls don't like it, whatever they may think."

There was a dash of bitterness in the tone, and Mrs. Grey, reading it by the light of her greater experience, said to herself:

"If Bernard knew how, he might win her yet—but for the 'other person.' Yes, I am afraid that other person has won the race."

"He is so infinitely superior to us that of course it is an infinite condescension when he speaks to us at all," Kate went on, with rising color. "But there, poor fellow! Dick says he can't help it. Perhaps if he had gone to Canada when he was young— By the way, I wonder if all Anglo-Canadians are pleasant?"

"*Anglo-Canadians!*" repeated Mrs. Grey, huskily. The hand still softly stroking Kate's was drawn away, and

clasped tightly over the other, and she raised her head from the cushions with a startled, questioning look.

"Yes," said Kate, carelessly, "because, if so, I would like to go and live there. But, dear me, how ill you are looking! Am I tiring you? If so, I'll go away at once, and ask your advice about my difficulty another time."

"No, I am not tired," said Mrs. Grey, rather faintly, and though she tried to smile, there was a look in her eyes as though, but for long habit of patience, she would fain have asked something on her own account. "What is your difficulty? Not that I am a good adviser. A person should have known how to order her own affairs successfully before she presumes to advise others; and I—but your trouble may be an easy one to remedy. Let us hear."

"It isn't one trouble, but two," said Kate, confidentially. "And the big one hasn't to do with myself so much as my brother. I've several brothers, you know, so I won't mention which it is, because, though he is the *very* best and dearest fellow in the world, I'm afraid he's been a wee bit foolish in this. You see, mamma and I hoped he would read down here; but—he doesn't like reading by himself; and of course I can't help him; I'm too stupid; so when mamma sent the governess down to look after us some days ago, she was to have D—my brother's room, and he was to go down to read with a clerical friend in Wales. He didn't like going at all, poor boy. In fact he was—was rather cross about it, and didn't want any of us to see him off. However, I would go to the station with him, and then I saw he had taken his ticket for London. Of course I thought it was by mistake, and said so; but he said it didn't matter, as he had to pass through London *en route*, in order to see Mr. Clive on business. Now, I don't see how London can be *en route* from Combe Regis to Llandudno! However, the dear boy was so put out I didn't like to say anything; and he desired me not to mention it to any one, as he should only stay a few hours in London, and his business with Mr. Clive was strictly private. But, Mrs. Clewer, twenty-four hours after he was gone, a letter came from Mr. Clive addressed to him

here; and since then a post-card from his friend in Wales, saying that his room has been three days waiting for him; and that two letters have arrived to his address—one from Eastbourne (that's mother), and one from the Temple (that's Mr. Clive). So, you see, he *can't* have seen him after all; and, if mamma writes to him, she can't have seen or heard from him either; and yet, I know he arrived safely, for I had a line from him the evening he arrived in London, bidding me not to write to him at Llandudno, till I had first heard from him. And—and I am so afraid something is wrong, and I don't know whether I ought to write to mamma. Dick would be very angry, I know; but still, if I ought—do tell me what you think."

"But what do you mean by wrong?" asked Mrs. Grey, kindly. "Your brother may have been detained on other business. How old is he?"

"Twenty-one. Only a boy, you see, poor fellow!" said Kate, shaking her nineteen-year-old head mournfully. "But—but—well, the fact is that there is a person—a young person in London at present, and I don't quite understand about it, but she will—will *insist* on marrying him; and she isn't even a lady, and Mr. Clive is trying to arrange with her; but I do wish mamma knew, for Dick is foolish sometimes; and, oh, it would be so dreadful!"

"I understand," said Mrs. Grey, quietly. "My dear, since you ask my advice, take it, and tell your mother at least what you have told me. It is always a mistake to keep anything, even trifles, from our parents when we are young; and marriage is no trifle. It is a thing too solemn to be trusted to any risks—a thing which, once done, can never be undone, as long as life lasts—lasts! and—ah, heavens!—how long it lasts sometimes!"

Her eyes were looking far away into the gold-tinted waves of western sky. The boughs of the great pinky-blossomed horse-chestnut outside swayed softly in the breeze, and cast wavering shadows on her pale, sunset-lighted face. Kate, sobered into a kind of awe, looked up at her half shyly, half wonderingly.

"I will write to-night if I don't hear anything more," she said, drawing a long breath. "I hope he won't be

very angry; but when he first spoke to me in confidence he did not give me an idea what she really was; and if it will save him, it is better even that he should be angry. Oh, dear!"—with another sigh—"I am glad I asked you."

Mrs. Grey turned round, as if suddenly recalled to the subject in question by the sound of the girl's voice.

"So am I," she said, "for there can be little risk in advising you to have no secrets from your mother. But you said you had another trouble."

"Not a trouble—only a doubt," corrected Kate, "and I hardly know how to tell you, for it is so ridiculously tiny, you will be sure to laugh at me."

"No, I will promise not to do that."

"And of course I can't mention names: indeed, if you were a friend of ours I could not tell you at all, because you would guess whom I meant, and it wouldn't be fair or right. That is just my difficulty at present; but I have been making such mistakes, and vexing mamma and all by acting for myself, that it would be a help to have a quite impartial person's advice. And I am sure you will keep all I say to yourself."

Mrs. Grey said she might be sure.

"Well," said Kate, plaiting the hem of her tunic busily between her fingers, "you must know that Bee Vanborough—that is the lady your relation lives with—has asked me to go on a visit to her as soon as the others are settled at Eastbourne; and mamma is willing that I should, because, since Dick doesn't want me, she thinks it a pity that I should miss the whole of the season; and for that matter, so do I."

Mrs. Grey nodded.

"That is the preface," said Kate. "Then"—smiling a little, and blushing very much—"there is a—a person—in fact, a friend of the family—who was down here a while ago, and left rather suddenly. I—we were rather offended about it at the time, but he—this person wrote to me—only a line, you know—the other day, explaining and apologizing, and thanking us for our kindness very nicely, and—and I am wondering now, *ought* I to go to Lady Vanborough's."

"My dear! why not?" asked Mrs. Grey, raising her eyebrows the eighth part of an inch.

"He—he put a postscript, too," said Kate, hanging her head, "and he said that—"

"Well?"

"That he hoped soon to see me at Lady Vanborough's, and clear away any—any bad impression his abruptness, or any other circumstance, might have left upon my mind, and—"

"Well?"—smiling.

"Well!" cried Kate, with a burst, "is it right—is it dignified, when people will combine to tease you about a person you only like as a friend, and who only likes *you* as a—a friend too, to do anything that spiteful people could say was giving encouragement to—to anything, though, you know, there isn't anything to be encouraged, and nobody wants to be encouraged. Such nonsense!" cried Kate, angrily; "and for Bee herself to join in it! As if Mr. M'Kenzie were not much too sensible—"

"*M'Kenzie!*" repeated Mrs. Grey. She half rose as she spoke, her limbs trembling, and in her face a white, horror-struck look; but Kate was too much occupied with her own little girlish trouble to pay heed to her.

"Did I say M'Kenzie?" she asked, biting her lips confusedly. "How stupid—how very stupid of me! Please, please not to say or think of it again, for I am vexed and ashamed enough already. And only think, if people were to talk to him as they have done to me!"

"M'Kenzie!" said Mrs. Grey again; "is *he*, then, the Canadian you spoke of?" She did not heed Kate either. These two women were so absorbed in their own emotions that neither even perceived those of the other; and outside, the low, red sunlight rested on the vine-leaves, and turned the geraniums to drops of fire; the bees drummed among the honeysuckle-sprays; far away, a dog was barking from a distant cottage; and farther still, in the intervals of silence, came a faint, deep murmur, the boom of the surf on the rocky shore where M'Kenzie had so nearly lost his life.

"Not exactly a Canadian," said Kate. "He is Scotch

by birth. Mamma knew a relation of his—Colonel Dallas. By the way, that is his Christian name. Dallas M'Kenzie. Doesn't it sound nice? Why—why, Mrs. Clewer—oh! what is the matter?"

For Mrs. Grey, without word or cry, had fallen face foremost, a senseless heap of soft, white drapery, and softer, whiter womanhood, prone on the floor at Kate Bellew's feet!

CHAPTER XXIX.

ON THE TERRACE WALK.

“I DON’T pretend to understand anything but that you are a little goose, Katie, my dear,” Lady Vanborough said, next morning. “And you know, if you will behave like a baby, other people will make remarks.”

“In that case I had better not go to Mrs. Gore’s to-night, and then they will have no occasion to do so,” Kate answered, with head erect and quivering lip.

She made it up with Bee later, owning that she had been “cross,” and making a great show of interest in the latter’s toilet for the evening. But it was a positive relief to her, when, on entering the crowded, brilliantly-lit rooms at half-past ten that night, the first person her eyes fell upon was, not Dallas M’Kenzie, but Bernard Clive. His face was turned towards the door, so that, even before the pillar of claret and silver stationed thereat had shouted, “Lady Vanb’ro’ ’n’ Miss B’lew!” at the top of a sonorous voice, his eye had caught Kate’s newly timid glance peeping from behind her chaperone’s broad shoulders, and he had conquered his first impulse to turn away and leave the room on the first convenient opportunity. Instead, he waited till she came near, and then saluted her as usual—a trifle awkwardly, perhaps, but then it is not easy for a man to feel perfectly unembarrassed at his first meeting with a girl after she has refused him. Rather to his surprise, Kate stopped, and held out her hand.

“I did not expect to meet you,” she said, with a smile which showed how little impression the fracas with him

had made on her mind, and which perhaps hurt him more than coldness or constraint would have done. "Have you heard from Dick, lately?"

"Not very. I heard from your mother, yesterday," he answered, keeping at her side, as indeed he was obliged to do, so as to reply to her.

"From mamma? Ah, dear, I wish she were here! What did she say?"

"That she wished *you* were there," he said, smiling, but with a little wonder in his tone at the trouble expressed in hers. "But that was only at the end. She wrote about that affair of Dick's—I understand you told her something of it."

"I thought—that is, I was advised—" Kate began, but was relieved by a dictatorial—

"Oh, quite right; quite right! Much better for girls to have no secrets from their parents. Besides"—in a different tone—"it was rather a relief to me since, as it had resolved itself into a money question, I required family assistance as to raising it. You'll be glad to know that I think it is settled now. Lord Lovegoats has consented—"

"What! does Uncle Theo. know?" cried Kate, in dismay. "Oh! will Dick ever forgive me?"

"We thought it better he should know nothing of your having spoken to your mother, or the subsequent arrangements," said Clive, kindly, as he saw the distress in her eyes. "Dick is rather difficult to manage on some subjects, you know; and as, if Lord Lovegoats gets him this Irish post, he must work hard for the Civil Service Exam., he had better remain where he is. He seems wonderfully contented there. I don't hear a growl or—"

"Is your card already full, Miss Bellew?"

It was Mr. M'Kenzie's voice, and in one second Kate forgot Dick, Clive, Civil Service Exams., everything and everybody in the world except the man whose mere voice had made her very shoulders rosy within their framing of soft tulle. Clive saw, and turned away with a sharp inward pang.

"Is that settled, I wonder?" he thought. "How transparent she is! I wonder if she remembers that day at Combe Regis. Well, I suppose there are some men who *can't* make themselves cared for."

"I am afraid you will hardly have a dance left to give me," said M'Kenzie, and low and pleasant as his voice was, there was a decided thrill of nervousness in it, which even Kate noticed, and made her feel more nervous herself.

"I thought you never danced," she said, giving him the tiny white-and-gold tablets which hung at her wrist, with a trustful liberality which moved to envious despair a gay young cornet of hussars who was just making his way through the press to get at her with a similar request.

"I never do dance, but all the same I want you to give me two running, if you will. Will you? I have something to tell you, and I'm afraid I can't do it under two."

He looked at her rather anxiously as he spoke, but Kate had grown suddenly grave and composed.

"Please mark the two," she said, in a very low, steady little voice, as though she were taking an affidavit to something; and then, without waiting for his thanks, she turned quickly away to the cornet, gave him a dance somewhere near the end, and suffered herself to be whirled away in the waltz then playing by a pre-engaged partner, who had just arrived to claim her in a state of red-hot hurry.

The moment came at last. It was pretty late in the evening, and she had not sat down once till then; but when the first notes of the marked quadrille were heard, a frantic desire came over her to accept the first partner who offered, and escape among the throng. It was not to be, however, for almost in the same moment she heard M'Kenzie's voice, and knew her hour was come.

"You look very pale," he said, offering her his arm, and speaking in a quiet easy way which a little reassured her. "Just now, when I was looking at you across the room, I thought you were going to faint. That dance was too fast

for anything. Don't you feel these rooms frightfully oppressive? they are so over-crowded."

Kate was struggling with an inward shiver at the moment, but she said "Yes" in perfect good faith. He ought to know better than she did; at any rate, she was prepared to think so.

"Let us go out on the terrace," said M'Kenzie. "Have you seen how prettily the gardens are lighted? This young Gore knows how to do things well; and what a handsome pair he and his wife are! They must be proud of one another. Stay, wait a moment. We mustn't have you catching cold, must we? I think this is Lady Vanborough's," and he caught up a white fleecy shawl, and wrapped it round Kate's pretty round shoulders with careful hands, before taking her out into the cool summer night.

The house was a large, old-fashioned one, not far from Fulham, and situated on the banks of the river. The drawing-room windows opened on to a broad terrace walk, paved with red-white Roman tiles, with a marble balustrade covered with creeping plants running round it, and here and there stands and vases of flowers, interspersed with wicker chairs and cushioned lounges. Below, the garden sloped down in bands of soft turf and brilliant flowers, to a croquet-lawn shaded by fine old sycamores; and then came another slope, and a second terrace bordering the river, which flowed outside like a broad black band, splashed here and there with silver, between them and the opposite shore. The night was sweet and warm, a light breath of air just stirring the surface of the glassy mirror below, and sending wafts of fragrance from the flowers into the envying nostrils of late passers by the Fulham road. Here and there among the trees glimmered the red or orange light of a Chinese lantern; but high over the silvered foliage and glistening water rode, amid her court of shining stars, the radiant queen of night, enthroned within a sky of deep brilliant blue, and casting a purer spiritual light on three girls who, in their shining ball-dresses and with their attendant cavaliers, were attempting an impromptu game of croquet by

the mystic light. Other couples were resting between the dances on the scattered seats outside the window, or wandering among the shadowy walks, revealed here and there by the gleam of a lantern; or leaning over the parapet of the lower terrace in (apparently) rapt contemplation of the river rippling below. It looked like a scene in the drama, so pretty and so unreal; and Kate, as leaning on M'Kenzie's arm, she too strolled to a bench at one end of the terrace, felt as if the whole scene were a play, in which she was taking a part, and as if something must happen every minute to dispel the illusion, and bring back the sober matter-of-fact of every-day reality. Dallas did not keep her long in suspense.

"Kate," he said, leaning his arms on the balustrade, but turning his head so that he might see Katie's face, white in the moonlight, and looking up with all trustfulness into his from her corner seat under a huge magnolia, "did you know that I had ever been married?"

"No!" said Kate. She said it with a little gasp. This was quite different from what she expected to hear, and perhaps the moonbeams were not all to blame for the color of her face.

"I thought Clive might have told you." Then, as she shook her head rather indignantly—"Well, never mind; it is so, whether you knew it or not. I was married this very month four years ago, at St. Louis-sur-Eaux, in Canada. Two hours after that ceremony my wife and I parted. We have never met since."

He spoke in short, husky jerks, with breaks between. This one lasted so long that Kate—poor little Kate! whose face had altered so woefully—plucked up courage to ask:

"And—and she? your wife?"

"She is dead," he said, hoarsely; then, turning and catching Kate's small cold hand between both of his—"Oh, Kate! if it had not been for that I could never have brought you down here this evening. If she had lived, though we might not have met again in this world, I could never have loved another woman—never tried to fill the place she left vacant. Katie, forgive me—

your dear little face looks pale; but didn't I tell you this was not a pleasant story to hear? If you don't care for me, bid me stop now, and I'll not utter another word of it; for if it's hard to listen to, it's harder still to tell."

He loosed her hand a little as he spoke, but the small fingers closed round his, and the small face looked up to his undaunted.

"Tell me or not, as you think best, Mr. M'Kenzie," she said, bravely. "I know you have had a great deal of trouble; I know you loved her—your wife; it was only right you should."

"It was not right," he answered, almost fiercely. "There was the bitterness of it. Kate, how shall I tell you? I loved her—loved her with the one passion of my life. I won her love in return, and married her at that little Canadian church in the far West; and yet she was not my wife; the love she gave me was not hers to give. She was married already! Whether for my sake, or for sake of my income and position—God knows which—she had lied to me and deceived me; and I learned it—good heavens! I can hardly bear to think of it now—by a letter from her former husband, given to me ten minutes after I had stood with her at the altar."

Kate said nothing, only her hand, still clasped in his, drew back by ever so little, and the face, a moment past turned up to the moonlight, drooped and hid itself in the shadow of the magnolias. It was enough for M'Kenzie's sensitive nature.

"I thought so!" he said, bitterly. "See! did I not tell you that the wrong she did me was irremediable, since even now—*now*, after four long years of suffering, it makes a girl who was my friend shrink from me, who am its victim."

"Oh! don't say that," cried Kate, quickly, her eyes filling at the accusation, "Mr. M'Kenzie, please don't. I did not mean it. Of course I know—every one knows that there are such wicked people. It was only the first hearing of it in this way; and I am so very, very sorry for you."

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"Thank you," he said, pressing the repentant little hand gently, "and forgive my quick tongue. You see how tried I have been. There isn't much more to tell, and I'll get through it as quickly as possible; only you ought to know how it came about.

"I met her first when I was engaged on some engineering work for the Government. She lived with her mother, a widow in very failing health, in a little cottage about half a mile from St. Louis-sur-Eaux. A road had been designed which would pass through their cottage, and it was about it that I made their acquaintance. I think I must have fallen in love with her at once; and no wonder! I don't believe any being half so lovely ever walked this earth—no, not even you, Katie, though you're far the fairest thing I've seen on this side of the water; but she was like nothing but one of those mediæval saints you see painted on dead-gold backgrounds with a lily in their hand; or like a lily itself, just so tall and grand and fair, with eyes of that pure, serene blue, which looked as if vulgar sin or care could never come near them, and a manner more like an English duchess than a Canadian woman, so sweetly dignified and perfectly refined. It did not seem as if anything on earth could ruffle her temper or sharpen her voice; and when you see what a passionate, irritable sort of fellow I am, you can guess what a haven of rest and sweetness such a nature must have seemed to me.

"The mother was dying, and both of them knew it. Ay—*she* told me so, and urged that they should not be disturbed till all was over. They had nothing to say against the disturbance, and of course they were to be fairly compensated. She only prayed me to put it off awhile, and—also of course—I agreed. I would have done as much for any one, let alone her whose lightest wish was already my law.

"The mother died, and she was left alone—more utterly alone than you could imagine, for they lived in great seclusion. She was English-born, and in all the world had only one relative left, a distant cousin in Toronto, who was just leaving for England. It was this

which gave me courage to tell her of my love. If she had been rich and happy, she would have seemed too far above me for such as I to woo or win. See what a fool I was, Kate, for I at least was an honorable man.

"I won her—not without difficulty; but she owned she loved me, and after that I would take no refusal. The marriage followed as soon as might be; I was eager to possess my prize; she was alone and friendless; and, indeed, once she had yielded, she showed no maidenly affectations for delay, and threw no obstacles in the way.

"We were married, and, as we re-entered the house that letter was given me. Would God I had got it an hour sooner! It was from her husband, and couched in the most insolent and threatening language. Little wonder! I might have written worse myself under similar circumstances; but it enclosed a copy of the first marriage certificate. It told me that they had been separated for some time on account of his having lost all his money, and being under a cloud. Worst of all, he gave me proof that they had been corresponding up to the last few weeks, quoted details of my own visits, facts about myself told only to her, and which could have been only told by her; and then—then, while I was reading this, and she changing her dress upstairs, the maid came in with a crumpled letter.

"‘Is this yours, sir? I think you dropped it. I found it under the dining-table.’

"I took it, but it was not mine. Kate, it was one of his letters to her, dated only ten days back. I have it now. I know every word of it by heart. Child, do you know what I did when I saw it first?"

But Kate made no answer. She might have said, "Killed her," if she had only judged by that fierce white face, and teeth gnawing savagely at his under lip. She only shivered and held her peace.

"I hardly know myself," he went on, hoarsely. "I think I went mad, for I tore up into her room, and flung the letter in her face, and trampled on her wedding-dress, and raved and stormed at her, and cursed her for the misery she had brought on me. I was mad, Kate, but it was she had made me so."

Again Kate shivered. All her warm young blood seemed to have turned to ice; but only her eyes asked the question her lips refused to ask.

"She said nothing," he answered, as though she had spoken, "not one word. She stood looking at me with that grand face of hers set like a marble statue, as stubborn and as unrepentant. I suppose she had made up her mind to expect it some day, though not so soon; only when my anger broke a little at the sight of her beauty, and I said something of love and excuse, she stopped me with a curt, 'Let me go; you are insulting me,' and swept out of the room without one backward look. I tried to stop her, to extract one word of explanation or sorrow—I remember that, and nothing more just then. I suppose I had a fit of some sort, for I didn't recover consciousness till late that evening, and she was gone by then. I never saw her again."

"And how—" Kate's quivering lips formed so much after a silence which seemed like an hour; it might have been five minutes in reality.

"How did I hear of her death? This way. I went to Toronto—don't despise me, Katie, but I could not let her disappear thus; and as soon as she was gone, all sorts of excuses for her came into my mind: explanations which she might have given if I had but controlled my passion in the beginning, and let her—I searched for her far and wide; for at least, if money had been her temptation, she should have had the half of mine; but it was no use. Her relation had left Toronto—it was thought, for England; and it was not for many weeks that I discovered that the last that had been seen of her was, that she had slept at a certain hotel, and taken a ticket for the Hudson steamer next morning. That steamer burst a boiler, and went down with crew and passengers. The details of the accident were in the very papers containing my advertisements for my wife—*my* wife! There, don't talk of it. Three days after we parted, and to be snatched away so suddenly! It seemed like a judgment. I wish it could have fallen on me instead. Nay"—as Kate's eyes met his—"I wished it then, at least. Per-

haps you will teach me to be grateful for life now. There's very little more for you to hear. I left the army then, went away, and traveled in the south, in Mexico and Chili—anywhere to forget. When I came back to the States I avoided society entirely, went nowhere, and never spoke to a woman if I could help it. I came to England, and I met you, my little dark-eyed English girl. It was quite by chance. I had been obliged to make some new acquaintances, to renew some old ones. I was asked as a favor to take a friend's wife to that ball, and there I saw you, and was won against my will to like you. You looked so *happy*, so radiant with innocent pleasure. I felt as if a sunbeam had got into the room, and as if even *I* must catch a ray of it if I could but get near you, and make you speak to me. You know the rest, don't you, Katie? How your innocent sympathy soothed me, your frankness and gaiety cheered me despite myself. There *could* be no deceit in a girl who spoke out every thought as it came uppermost, no secrets in a life which had grown up in a sheltered English home for only nineteen years; and sometimes, when the thought came to me that you might—that you did care for me a little bit, you can't tell how strong was the temptation to tell you all my sad story, and ask you if, in spite of it, you could give yourself to me for my own. It was the selfishness of the thing stayed me. To ask you, so young and bright and pretty! Aren't you indignant with me for giving way now, and asking you for your fresh young life in exchange for the battered remains of mine? Tell me the truth, my darling—I don't think you could tell me anything else; it isn't in you—but speak out fearlessly. Don't hide your face, Katie, or be afraid of hurting my feelings. I shall not feel one whit the less tenderly to you, whatever you may say. Answer me"—putting one arm gently round her, and drawing her to his side, that he might better see her face.

It was a very pale little face—a very sober one. Dallas felt conscience-stricken when he saw how entirely the girlish light-heartedness had died out of it under his passionate rain of words.

"My love," he cried, remorsefully, "how sad you look ! Forgive me. I never ought to have asked you ; only I thought—"

"You thought I loved you," said Kate. Her forehead was drawn into two very grave little lines. Her small hands clasped each other tight ; and yet there was no thought of wounded pride in her heart, no resentment at the contrast between the greatness of the gift he was asking, the little he had to offer ; no recollection of the far greater love which ought to have been poured out at her feet by the man who expected to receive the first fresh fount of hers. Kate was too utterly unselfish where she loved to think of how much or how little she was going to get in exchange for that love. What she thought was, as usual, expressed in what she said.

"You thought I loved you. Would it please you if I did ?"

"*Please me !* It would be such happiness as I could hardly dare to think of."

"You are sure—quite sure"—looking up with serious, child-like earnestness in his face.

"More than sure. My child, don't keep me in suspense. It is I who am so unworthy of you."

"That is not true, so don't say it. No: wait one moment. I am only afraid—"

"What ?"

"That when you have got me you will be disappointed because I am not grave and gentle, or—or like a grand white lily."

"Katie, that is cruel. You know how I should value you, the more for your unlikeness to her."

"Then—take me!"—nestling suddenly to him like a little bird—"for I do love you. I love you better than any one in the world. I would rather be with you than with any one in the world. I will try, oh ! so hard to be good and make you happy."

"God bless you, my darling, my bright, loving child, and help me to repay you," he said, folding her tight in his arms, and kissing lips, brow, and cheeks of the little face resting so trustfully on his breast.

CHAPTER XXX.

WHAT COULD THE MATTER BE ?

“DO you think Dallas can be ill, mamma ? It is such a long time—four days, nearly—since we have seen him. But, mamma, what is the matter ? You look worried about something.”

“It is only Dick, my dear. See here, Katie, he wants—”

But Kate had her finger to her lips, and was listening to something else.

“The hall-door !” she said, her pretty color coming and going with eager anticipation. “It must be—yes, it is Dallas !” and she was flying off, when checked by Lady Margaret’s “One moment, Kate, dear,” and Eve’s rebuking “Kate, how terribly demonstrative you are ! I am sure Mr. M’Kenzie would think quite as much of you if you did not go running out to meet him in that way. He admires dignity in women so much.”

“Dallas would not like a colder welcome than Dick, and I don’t think it undignified to run out to meet him,” Kate said ; but she stood still, nevertheless, blushing very much, and fidgeting painfully.

How very slowly Dallas was coming upstairs, and how very disagreeable Eve was growing !

Dallas did come upstairs slowly. Even the two ladies who had not troubled their heads with fears lest he should be ill because he had not made his appearance for two or three days, perceived how heavily his lingering footsteps sounded in contrast to his usual brisk, active step, and

Lady Margaret had time to say, "I do not think it is Dallas M'Kenzie, after all," and Eve to reply, "But if not, mamma, Thomas would have come up first, to announce him," before a shadow darkened the doorway, and Kate sprang forward with an exclamation :

"Dallas ! Is anything the matter ? Oh, how ill you are looking !"

He *was* looking ill : not only horribly pale and worn, but with dark rings round his eyes, and an appearance as of gray among the black locks over his temples. It must have been a very serious attack to make such a change in a man within the space of three days ; and Lady Margaret, as she held out her hand, spoke words of anxiety and sympathy :

"For you have indeed been ill. Why did you not let us know ?" she said, in her genial, motherly way, which more than made amends for the cameo brooch put on upside down, and the tumbled ruffles at her wrist. M'Kenzie flushed suddenly.

"Ill ? Oh, dear, no ! What should make you think so, Lady Margaret ?" he said, with a kind of nervous irritation in his usually pleasant-sounding voice, which made Eve glance at him more narrowly.

"You are not going away, Lady Margaret ?" he said, "do stay and give me your advice about the library at Weybridge. Stencil says the paper is too pale a tint for light oak, and yet both you and Katie took such a fancy to that suite at Gillot's. What do you think we had better do ?"

Lady Margaret sat down at once. What woman, however self-abnegating, can refuse to give her opinion on such a deeply interesting matter as the furniture of her daughter's future home ? Katie's mother was "womanly past question." She threw herself eagerly into the discussion, seeking out instances of other libraries, and canvassing the rival merits of light and dark oak, inlaid floors and stained windows, with the keenest maternal zest, while Kate sat by, answering when spoken to, but wondering inwardly whether her mother did not notice how completely Dallas's mind had wandered from the

subject he had himself started, or how pale and dreamy his face had grown.

"Let us leave the library unfinished till we come back from abroad," he said, upsetting with a light laugh all the *pros* and *cons* he had called forth. "We shall be sure to pick up things in France or Italy which Katie will like better than West End wares; and I shall give her *carte blanche* for her purchases. There are no debtor's prisons now-a-days, Katie, are there? and at the worst, we can but sell the house and go out to make roads in Canada again. Lady Margaret, what are we putting off this wedding till the end of October for? Does a young lady's wedding-dress really take six months to make? Here you are, staying in town all through the dullest part of the year, while if we had been married at the beginning of August, you might have got away to the seaside at once, and been as comfortable as possible."

"My dear Dallas! What has made you so impatient to-day?" Lady Margaret said, half rebuking, half flattered; but Katie did not even blush or smile. Her eyes were still fixed on her lover with a look of puzzled distress; and she was relieved when, the next moment, Lady Margaret started up, exclaiming:

"Ten minutes to five! I shall be barely able to catch the post. Dallas, will you spare Katie to me for one moment? It is only something about Dick," and so hurried away. Kate followed more slowly. Indeed, she lingered to say:

"I shall not be five minutes, Dallas. Look at that picture while I am away, and tell me what frame would do best for it."

But he had fallen into a fit of abstraction, and neither heard nor answered; and Katie joined her mother with such a very grave little face that Lady Margaret noticed it, and ascribed it to a wrong cause.

"It is cruel to call you away, love, when you haven't seen him for several days," she said, kindly; "but, you see, I can't learn to do without you as quickly as Dallas wishes; and there is no one else I can speak to about Dick. That £150 I had to find to prevent the scandal

of a breach of promise case has crippled me terribly ; and the wedding—”

“Never mind the wedding, mammy dear,” said Kate, cheerfully. “I don’t want it hastened ; and as for Dallas—if he says any more about it, I’ll have it put off for another year. I don’t know what is the matter with him this afternoon, poor fellow ! I never saw him so strange before. But as for that money, I’m sure it was well spent in getting poor dear Dick clear of those horrid, intriguing women. I can’t think how he got into the hands of such vile, coarse-minded people. I dare say Dick is sorry for the trouble he has given, and is going to turn over a new leaf.”

Lady Margaret shook her head again. It seemed to her that constant appeals for money, and extravagant orders on London shops, were signs, not of his turning over a new leaf in his rustic exile, but of his getting involved in some fresh folly or entanglement. There were more gray hairs in the mother’s head now than there had been six months ago ; and Bernard Clive and Lord Lovegoats had severally said so much to her on her habit of spoiling her first-born that, after many struggles with herself, she decided not to send the young gentleman the check he so peremptorily demanded, but to inquire for what it was wanted. It was Kate, however, who must put this decision into words. The mother could not nerve herself to that effort ; and accordingly her daughter was obliged (much *contre cœur*) to sit down and write a note to her brother, informing him that his wishes could not be complied with for reasons dictated by Lady Margaret.

Dallas had been left nearly half-an-hour alone when his betrothed returned to him ; and she came into the room quickly, and with some little noise and bustle, feeling compunctious for her long absence, which had seemed but a few minutes to her while her mind was occupied with her brother, and anxious lest Mr. M’Kenzie might be affronted at it. She had already found out that he was of a somewhat exacting, if not jealous, disposition, and liked to enjoy an entire monopoly of his belongings.

He was not fidgeting about the room, however, as she expected, or brimming over with tender reproaches for her neglect. On the contrary, he did not seem to hear her entrance; for he was standing at one of the further windows, gazing at something which he held in his hands.

"Dallas! What is it? Oh! you must be ill. Do tell me what is the matter."

Her voice startled him, and he turned round not smiling, but with an almost fierce gesture of command.

"Where did you get *this*?" he asked, and his voice was so low and hoarse, it did not sound like his own—"this," striking an unframed canvas which he held in the other hand. "Who left it here? Who did it? For pity's sake, Kate, answer; and don't stand looking at me so. *Where* did you get it?"

But Kate could only stand and stare in blank amazement. Was Dallas mad? or was this fierce, incoherent man her lover at all? For what could there be to agitate him so dreadfully in the sketch which the invalid artist had left behind at Combe Regis?

CHAPTER XXXI.

"FACE TO FACE."

L'*HOMME propose*— No; however suitable a quotation for the present moment, and however impossible to find an equal or better one, I will not reproduce that stalest and most hackneyed of all sayings; but will rather leave my sentence unsounded and proceed *tout court* to an incident which took place some few days after the family discussion at the Bellews.

Dallas had been with Kate and her second sister to pay some calls at South Kensington, and about three minutes walk from the Museum therein situated. The great, red, conglomerate-looking pile was just in front of them as they came out of the house, and Kate at once recollected that some new pictures had been bequeathed to the galleries by a lately defunct art-collector, which she had not seen.

"Let us go in for a few minutes, Dallas," she said; "I should like to see them as we are so near—that is, unless you've anything else to do." And Dallas, only too ready to gratify any of her little fancies, agreed on the instant, declaring he should like nothing better.

They walked slowly through the well-lit and warmed galleries, stopping now and then to glance at old favorites, and shudder at old horrors in the way of "pot-boilers" and "signboards," and attracting as much notice from other loiterers as generally falls to the share of two pretty girls in very opposite styles of beauty, in company with a man rather remarkably handsome and foreign-

looking. Kate, with her dark, laughing eyes, rich coloring and *riante* expression, had, as usual, most admirers; but Eve—now quite as tall as her sister, slender as a willow, and with her transparent skin and flaxen braids rendered doubly effective by their setting: dark, broad-brimmed felt and shady plumes—had her own share; and even Dallas said, laughing:

"I ought to be a proud man to-day. My fair companions draw all eyes from the pictures."

"Not *all*," said Eve, with a quiet smile, and a half imperceptible gesture.

They were just entering one of the smallest rooms, in which there were not more than half-a-dozen people; and these half-a-dozen never turned an eye on the newcomers, being occupied in watching, as near as was consistent with (British) civility, the performances of a lady artist who, seated on a low campstool, was sketching a copy on wood from one of the pictures.

"My! ain't she a stunnin' handsome creature?" "An' ain't she doin' of it spicy?" were comments they heard from two of the junior male gapers. Kate whispered laughingly to her lover:

"Dallas, I know you're longing to go and look at her. Do it at my desire, and tell me if she's copying my pet in the corner. Eve and I will wait here."

Dallas obeyed at once, not because he was longing to do so, but because pleasuring his lady-love was his *haut devoir* at the present moment. As he came behind the artist, however, Kate, who had a little shifted her position, caught sight of the latter's profile over an intervening shoulder, and exclaimed in her own quick, impulsive voice:

"Why, it's—it's Mrs. Clewer! Oh, how strange!"

She spoke rather loudly, and the lady in question heard and turned round, half rising from her seat; Dallas was just behind her, and the movement brought them face to face. What change came over his, the sisters did not see. That which they did see was the deadly, terror-stricken whiteness which overcast hers, the shiver which shook her whole body like a leaf in a gale of wind. There

was a dead silence for one moment—then, the tall figure swayed heavily back—there came a crashing fall, a hoarse passionate cry—"Averil! Averil! My love!"—and Dallas had thrust back the people crowding round, and lifted her from the ground, holding her face against his breast with one arm, while he warned off assistance from outsiders with the other.

"Did you hear what he called her?" said Eve, very low. "Kate, we had better go away. Oh, Kate! pull down your veil, and come away with me. It will be better so."

CHAPTER XXXII.

"THAT OTHER WOMAN."

ALL idea of Kate, all remembrance of the people round, was banished from Dallas then; and yet he was dreamily aware, first, that the latter were dispersing in obedience to some order, and then that two women were beside him—an attendant from the waiting-room, and a motherly-looking old body, who proffered salts and recommended that he should carry "the poor lady out of the smell of the paint." Dallas obeyed mechanically, and between them they carried her down stairs and laid her on a bench in one of the long, cool corridors, which happened to be otherwise untenanted at the moment. And then it was, as gently and slowly he laid the head, once so dear, upon a pillow hastily improvised out of the attendant's shawl, that his presence of mind came back to him—as the eyelids, a moment back pressed down so heavily upon the white cheek that death himself might have laid his eternal seal on them, were slowly and painfully lifted, and the blue eyes rested on him with a faint, troubled, flickering smile, as though the soul behind were but half awake, as the pale lips parted with a murmur of *his* name, that, sharp and keen as a knife piercing to his very heart, came back to Dallas M'Kenzie the full remembrance of all that had been in the past, and all that was in the present. He tried to speak to her, but there was a sort of choking sob in his throat which prevented him from uttering a word; and it was the attendant who said: "She's coming to, sir, nicely now," and held a glass

of water to Averil's lips, sprinkling a few drops over her face, and fanning her, with womanly words of comfort and encouragement. They were hardly needed. The first cold drops seemed to revive Mrs. Grey's scattered senses, and she sat upright, trembling and white as death; but resolutely struggling for composure, and as resolutely averting her eyes from the man who stood at a little distance, gazing, with tight-clasped hands and haggard brow, down on her.

"There now, m'm, you're getting better, aren't you, dear? That's right then," said the waiting woman, kindly, and tying on the poor woman's bonnet with brisk, tidy hands.

"Ay, get her a glass of wine," put in the motherly body, smoothing down Averil's golden hair with a broad, fat hand, in a dogskin glove. "That'll put a little life in her, pore dear. I must be going back to my children above there; and if you'll take my advice, sir, you'll get the lady, as seems to be a friend of yours, into a cab as soon as possible, an' see her 'ome. They do say that dratted paint's the un'olesomest thing possible."

She trotted away as she spoke; and thus it chanced that for one moment the man and woman so sadly parted, so strangely met, were alone. Then Dallas spoke:

"I thought you were dead," he said, hoarsely. "Averil, Averil, how is it I find you here, and *thus*? For heaven's sake, speak to me."

"What do you want me to say?" she asked, squeezing her fingers together with a desperate effort to repress the shiver which swept over her whole frame at the sound of his voice. "I *am* dead—to you. Have you forgotten?"

"I have forgotten nothing," he answered, bitterly; "least of all, how I love you, and how—"

She stood up. Pale and weak as she was, there was a mingled terror and resolution in her face which made her strong enough to stand. Her voice, low though it might be, sounded wonderful, steady.

"Do not say any more. I had prayed we might never meet again. God has not granted my request. Don't make me rebel against His will. Good-bye."

"Good-bye!" he echoed. "Do you mean to say that after all that has passed, after only now finding you—you whom I believed dead—you would coldly send me away from you without one word of explanation or—"

"It is *because* of all that has passed that I send you away," she interrupted, the same look of resolution always on her face, her eyes always turned from him. "Of all people living in this world, there is no man and woman have more cause to avoid one another than you and I. If I had not been so weak just now, you—" For the first time her voice faltered and broke. For the first time the color rose in her cheek. "Dallas," she added, with sudden, pathetic earnestness, "don't let us prolong this meeting, or add more sorrow to what has gone before. Nothing has altered; nothing has changed. Remember *how* we parted. I have done you enough injury, I grant it. Forgive me, and let me go."

"Forgive you!" he repeated, passionately. "Do you think I have waited five years to do *that*? Oh, Averil! why didn't you say 'Forgive me' then? Why didn't you speak one word of gentleness or excuse? Did you think I meant all I said in my rage? Didn't you know—"

He broke off, for the woman had come back with the wine, and further speech was impossible. Averil took it and drank it with the gratefulness of one who knew her strength needed such support, saying some words of thanks at the same time in her own gracious manner, which always seemed to give them additional value. Dallas stood by, the while, torn and quivering with conflicting emotions, and wondering at her composure—wondering that she *could* bend her head to him so gravely, and from him so determinately, when she had finished with the woman. She had gone some steps from him before he was at her side again.

"You will let me go home with you, at least?" he said, low and earnestly. "I do not ask to go in. Perhaps for more reasons than even you know of, it would be better not—better for me, at least," and he laughed bitterly. "You seem to take things coolly enough, but I *must* speak to you and ask—"

"You must not speak to me nor I answer," she broke in firmly, but hurrying on with a swift, unsteady step. "There has been wrong enough done already. I am not going to add to it."

"Who did the wrong?" he retorted. "Not I."

"No," she said, gently, a wonderfully sweet smile lighting up her face, "not you, Dallas. Thank God for it, not you. Oh! be glad of that, and do not begin it now."

They had passed through the narrow covered entrance-way, and gained the open air. The setting sun was gilding the roof of the Exhibition opposite, and reddening all the western sky. The dome of the Albert Hall stood up like a huge dark globe against the ruby-tinted clouds. A long stream of carriages were filtering in and out of the Park gates at the top of the hill, and the cool breeze blew refreshingly on M'Kenzie's heated brow. All of a sudden he started.

"Good gracious!" he exclaimed, "what has become—"

His color changed, and he laid his hand on Averil's to stay her.

"I must go back," he said; "I had forgotten. I—but stay while I get you a cab. You are not fit to walk, and— What do you want?"

He had turned irritably to a small boy, who was trying to attract his attention, and the little urchin looked up, breathing hard, as if in haste.

"Oh, please sir," he panted, "I runned arter you with this. The young lady telled me to give it you, but I couldn't find you no how in the gallery."

The young lady! Only a moment before had Dallas remembered Kate. His confusion and discomposure were even evident to Mrs. Grey; and they increased as he read the penciled line within the little note handed him:

"Only to tell you that a cab will be waiting at the south door. I thought I should be most useful in going to fetch one. Don't be angry with me for not waiting. I am obliged to take Eve home. K."

"Thank God she didn't stay! Thank God that she suspects nothing," he said to himself.

And then he turned to Mrs. Grey. For the first time she was looking at him, closely, as if to read what was passing in his mind, and before that searching glance his eyes fell, and the red blood rushed into his face.

"A cab is waiting for you round the corner," he said, hurriedly, "Take my arm and let me lead you to it."

"A cab—for *me*!" she repeated, wonderingly.

"Yes,"—but he still spoke in quick, nervous tones—"a—a friend who was with me, and saw you faint, went for it. Will you come?"

Once again Mrs. Grey looked at him, half comprehending this time the cause of his embarrassment.

"Averil, let me go with you to your door."

"No," she said, quietly. "Thank you, but good-bye. We shall not meet again; and—and, Dallas, I think I understand. I remember, now, I heard her voice, and I am very glad."

"Averil," he pleaded in an agony, "you are wrong. You *don't* understand. For mercy's sake, give me your address, at least. I *must* write to you."

The tears were standing in both their eyes, but she shook her head, and only clasped her hands the tighter, when he strove to take one in his own.

"It is better not," she said. "It would do no good, and you will own it, when you are alone. Good-bye."

CHAPTER XXXIII.

"THEN TRUST ME ALL IN ALL, OR NOT AT ALL."

A WARM, sunshiny day; the air moist, with no more wind than the breathing of a sleeping infant; the sky very purely blue in the zenith, but fading into a faint, golden haze, which seemed to rise from the horizon and wrap it round with a dreamy glory, like the halo which encircles the memory of the dead. A day such as we only get in autumn, when the glory of the lost summer, Nature's best-loved child, still clings about its mother's heart, and gives a tender and serene sadness to the face of earth and sky. In the square, tall dahlias, amber, black, and crimson; sunflowers, rank and greedy; and China asters of every hue, making bright the shady beds. Little Dottie, a brighter flower than any growing, playing croquet on a patch of gold-green grass, with three other wavy-locked, short-skirted little damsels. Kate, buttoned up in a cloth jacket, and with a book in her hand, pacing up and down one of the shady walks, her slim young figure now hidden and now revealed by the trunks of the trees, which every now and then sent a crimson leaf fluttering down upon her head from the many-tinted foliage above, or suffered a stray golden beam from the sunny sky beyond, to bring out the warm tints in her hair, and throw a brightness over her sober little face.

A very sober face to day and strangely unlike the one which Kate was wont to present to the sunshine, and yet not so much sad as troubled and perplexed. A new thing that, for Kate, also; prompt decision, as often wrong as

right, and seldom giving her time to indulge in uncertainty, being rather a characteristic of Miss Bellew's impulsive disposition. Her face seemed to have grown older too in the night—the round, wide-opened eyes shaded by a half frown, and the full lips compressed, so as to give a different expression to her face.

She had not even turned the pages of the book which, loosely grasped in one hand, served more for an excuse for her lonely walk than for any amusement therein; but now, as a tall hat showed suddenly over the shrubs that skirted the railings, and a hand was heard fumbling with the lock of the gate behind her, her head did bend in sudden newly-awakened interest over the page for a moment. The next, as if in native hatred of pretenses, the volume was sharply closed, and turning round, Kate shifted it into the other hand, that she might open the gate for Dallas M'Kenzie. He had put his hand over to turn the key for himself, but his fingers seemed to have a sort of nervous quiver in them, and his face was pale and lined.

"How did you find me out?" said Katie. "Have you been to the house?"

She looked him full in the face with a pleasant smile of greeting, but, with a book in one hand and the gate in the other, it was not easy to offer the new-comer anything to shake, and he did not seem to expect it.

"Yes," he said, shutting the gate for her and then turning to walk at her side, "I went to the door, but they—the servant told me you were in the square, so I didn't go in."

"I am glad you didn't," said Kate, "for mamma has one of her headaches, and you would only have seen Eve. But won't you come in now?"

"Not unless you were going to do so. I couldn't come yesterday evening—that is, I knew of course that you were going out, and when I got away it was so much later than I thought, that I was afraid I should only interrupt your dressing. I was so vexed that you went home alone, Kate."

"I was afraid that it looked rather unfeeling," said Kate, whose cheeks had grown very red, "but it was not

my fault. Eve is not strong, you know, and she wanted to get back so much that I had no choice. Mamma would never have forgiven me if I had let her go alone. And I sent a woman to relieve you. You got my note, didn't you? Indeed I wanted to stay."

"Your note? Oh, yes! You were most kind and thoughtful. It was on your account only that I was vexed—lest you might think me inattentive, I mean," M'Kenzie explained, hardly knowing whether to be relieved or embarrassed that things had taken the turn of Katie's apologizing to *him*. Her face, as she answered, did not enlighten him.

"Inattentive! I could not think you that when you were attending to a poor woman who had fainted. I knew the only thing for her was to carry her out of the smell of the paint, and those crowding people, and you were the only person to do it."

"Yes," he said, eagerly, "a woman would not have been strong enough, and it would have been too brutal to have left her there. I knew you would see that, and—and not be vexed with me."

"Did she come to soon?" asked Kate, rather coolly.

"No—at least, it seemed a long time."

"You saw her home, I suppose. Did she tell you she knew me?"

"No! *Do* you know her, Katie? How, in the name of wonder? But I did not see her home; she would not have allowed me, even if I had wished it. I don't even know her address. You believe me, Kate, don't you?"

"Believe you? Of course," said Kate, composedly. "It would be rather funny if you and I didn't believe one another, wouldn't it? But I'll tell you how I know her. I met her at the seaside. She was lodging at a farm, and I went to see her because she was an artist, and ill. Bee Vanborough said it was wrong, but I didn't think about it at the time. She told me her name was Mrs. Clewer, and she went away suddenly one day, leaving me that picture I showed you, and which—you know"—breaking off in her sentence, with a quick look in his face—"I heard afterwards that she had been a compan-

ion of Lady Vanborough's. *There* she called herself 'Mrs. Grey.' Mr. Clive got her the situation."

"Clive! *Clive*, did you say? Nonsense! It couldn't be. Where can he have met her?" Dallas broke in with great agitation, which sobered down into a flush of shame before the wondering look in Kate's eyes.

"You had better ask him," she said, with a good deal of quiet dignity. "I have told you all I know of my own self. If you want to know more, you must go to Lady Vanborough or Mr. Clive."

And, having made *her* explanation, Kate turned as if to go into the house. M'Kenzie laid his hand on her arm, checking her, a look of real distress and contrition on his face.

"Katie, my dearest, don't speak to me in that tone. Sit down on this bench a moment. Indeed, I am not to blame in the way you think. Only sit down, and let me tell you."

"I don't think anything yet," said Kate, sitting down with most unaffected readiness to hear. "I don't want to think till you have told me."

"That is all very well," said M'Kenzie, taking one chilly hand in his, and stooping to see into her face, "but do you mean that you and your sister have not been already blaming and condemning me for yesterday's occurrence; and all the more from my not being able to come at once and explain it to you? I know women better than that."

"I don't see why we need trouble about my sister," said Kate, with a keen sense of how she had been made to suffer from Eve's insinuations and pity, and how hard a fight she had had in persuading that young lady to keep both for the innocent victim only till the culprit should choose to make his explanations. "As to my blaming you, Dallas—but I should have thought you knew how I love you well enough to trust me for that."

"Do you love me well enough to trust *me*, Katie?"

"I should not be engaged to you if I didn't," she answered, with tears in her eyes.

"Yet you did not this moment. I don't think you do now—quite."

"I try," she said, brokenly. Then, with a great effort at generosity, "I will, Dallas. You need not tell me unless you like. Indeed I trust you!"

"My own dear little girl!" he said, with real fondness, drawing her closer to him, and lifting her hand to his lips. "My love! If I only were worthy of you!" Then feeling her shrink ever so little, in involuntary remembrance of the word "love" she had heard him use to another woman yesterday, he added, hurriedly:

"Kate, I had a great shock yesterday; I could not come to you till I had got over it. Cannot you guess who that lady was who fainted in the Picture Gallery—fainted at the sight of *me*? Don't let us use any disguises about it; there need be none with you."

Slowly, but quite decidedly, Kate shook her head. She still held herself rather away from her lover, and her face had grown very pale. It grew paler yet, and the distance between them increased when he added, huskily:

"Do you remember the story I told you on the terrace at the Gores'? That woman is my—is the girl I married at S. Louis-sur-Eaux—the false wife I thought drowned four years ago in the Hudson."

A dead silence. One or two crumpled yellow leaves rustled waveringly down, first on to Dallas's shoulder, then on to the ground below. A couple of linnets flew pecketing about in the boughs overhead. There was a sound of water dripping, drop by drop, from a trough running round the weedy old summer-house behind them. Nothing more.

"Katie," said Dallas, his voice low and shaken, "won't you speak to me? Have you nothing to say?" He tried to take her hand again, but she almost snatched it from him, and covered her face with it, half-sobbing:

"One moment! I will in one moment!—Oh, Dallas!—Do you mean *really*?—Are you *sure*?"

"I wish I were not!" he answered, bitterly.

"Oh, don't say that! Dallas, I am so glad, so glad. Oh, didn't I know—!"

"Glad!" he repeated, in almost angry wonder. "I should like to know why!"

"Don't be vexed with me," and she turned her shining eyes and glowing cheeks to him; "I could only think at first how little other people knew you! I was sure I could trust you, my good, noble Dallas— Oh, poor fellow! poor fellow!" as her face suddenly altered. "I know it is terrible for you! But I couldn't help being glad that you were as good and great as I had always thought you."

"You are a silly child," he said, too sadly for much gratitude. "But I am glad you can trust me. You may. Shall we go into the house now? You will be catching cold sitting out here."

"Not just yet," she said, putting her hand for the first time in his, and looking in his face. "Dallas, you look very ill. This has been a great blow to you."

He turned away his head with some impatience. "My dear, if you were a little older, you would understand that without asking."

"You loved her so very much," she persisted, half inquiringly. The cloud on his face deepened; he turned on her, sharply:

"So much, that if I had known she was alive and here, I would have stayed in Canada, Mexico, anywhere, at the other side of the world, that I might not run the risk of seeing her face again, when the sight can only bring me the pain I am suffering now. How little you understand such things!"

"I am learning to understand," she said, very simply; but something in her voice, and in the white look which had come over her face, showed Dallas how passionately he had spoken. He tried to apologize; but she stopped him at the first word.

"I think I understand more than you do. This lady—Mrs. Grey, or Clewer—you think very, very wicked; that she deceived you dreadfully. That was the least part of the sin, of course"—a start at this from M'Kenzie, who opened his eyes somewhat—"but still it was bad enough. Dallas, *I don't think so*. I'm sure there must have been some mistake. Oh, don't be angry! Remember, I've seen, I've spoken to her. A woman can't be so

mistaken in another woman as I should be, if she were the vile—”

He stopped her, not angrily, but authoritatively. “Hush! Never hint at *that* possibility. If you love me, be silent! It is not even possible, but—”

“If it were?” she suggested, timidly.

“If it were—then for my sake—both our sakes—never think of it, or speak your thought to me. Great heavens! If it were—”

“You would not have asked me to marry you then, would you?” she asked, looking up earnestly into his face.

“Would that have made a live man dead or altered our lives? But it is not so. Child, how can you talk so?”

“Because I think—indeed, my dear Dallas,” and her lips quivered, but she spoke bravely, “I think I ought to set you free. I think you ought not to go on with this.”

“Free!” he repeated, with such a sudden blaze of color in his face, such a light in his eyes, that she shrank back, thinking it anger; and he, fearful that he had betrayed himself, and deadlily ashamed of the consciousness of what the momentary sound of that word “free” had been to him, hastened to extinguish the thought in half-simulated harshness. “Free! Throw me over, you mean! Is that what you want, Kate? And would *you* do it too? I thought you, at least, loved me.”

“You know I do,” said Kate, the tears brimming in her eyes. “I wish you didn’t know it so well, for then you could judge better. Oh, Dallas dear! be fair with me. It *is* different now you know she is alive; and suppose—”

“Kate, I will not hear that ‘suppose.’ Do you forget the proofs? *I know*, and only too well.”

“But you did not know she was living,” Kate persisted, pleading against her own heart, and with a great lump in her throat, which seemed as if it would choke her.

“What difference does that make? Are not five years’ sacrifice enough to one woman’s wrong doing? Is my whole life to be made desolate by her memory? I have been fair with you. Kate, I told you the whole misce-

able story when most men would have hidden it from you. If it did not weigh then against your marrying me, it should not weigh now. Of course if you choose to take offense at my surprise of yesterday—though, as you see, I am here at your side, not even knowing the woman's present name or address—if you *want* your freedom back—”

“Dallas, you know it is not that!” cried poor Kate, in an agony. “You know how I love you, and it is only that I want you to be happy.”

“I thought and hoped you were going to make me happy.”

“I couldn't if you did not love me,” she whispered, turning her head against his shoulder to hide her tears.

“My dearest child, I do love you, the same now as I ever did,” he cried, touched by her innocence and affection, and asking himself what the man would deserve who could break faith with such a little childish thing. The leaves were still thick enough on the trees to serve as a screen, and he turned up her face to his, and kissed it twice tenderly. “My darling, can't you trust my love as well as me?” he asked, holding her to him and trying to smile.

“It is because I do trust you, and know how good you are, that I am afraid that even if you still cared for her—”

“Remember that you are speaking of another man's wife,” he said, sternly.

“But he might die—be dead even now. Oh, Dallas!”

“My dear love, were he twenty times dead, his widow could never be my wife. A woman who acted as she did might be forgiven, but not so far. Come, Katie, you don't really want to throw me over, and leave me all alone, as you found me?—you, who are all I have.”

“You know I don't, unless it were for your good,” she said, the happy smile stealing back, as she leaned her head against him.

“My good is bound up in you, so never speak of this again. It was an unfortunate accident, but it could not be helped. Now let neither of us ever mention it again. Promise me, Kate.”

"If you—like," said she, hesitatingly, but with an uneasy recollection of that pale, sorrowful face, with its calm eyes and noble brow. "Only—Dallas, you said she had no relations, and she looks so ill. Do you think she could be very poor?"

"Hush!" he said, wincing visibly. "That is not for you to trouble about. I have spoken to a lawyer—Mr. Clive. If she is in want, he will relieve her."

"You are very generous," said Kate, worshipingly; "but *Mr. Clive*! It is very strange!"

"Ah! what did you say about him?"

Kate repeated it, and now with Lady Vanborough's suppositions as to the lawyer, too, having lost his heart to this terrible and all-conquering woman. "Not that she believed it," she said, thinking to herself that if he had done so, he had certainly got over it before he came to Combe Regis, unless—unless it could have been pique—not a pleasant idea, that; and yet, if true, might it not account for his brusque, unloverlike manner? Ah! what did it matter, though, Kate thought, while she loved Dallas, and Dallas loved her? She stole a look at him half timidly, as if expecting to meet his eyes watching her; but they were turned on vacancy, his hands were knotted together, and his brow corrugated, as though in attempt to solve some weighty question; and Kate felt her heart sink with a sudden unaccountable load of doubt and misgiving.

"Shall we call Dottie, and go into the house?" she said, rising, and the violent start he gave showed how far away from her his mind had gone.

"No, dear, no," he answered, hurriedly. "I can't stay now. Good-bye."

And with a hasty pressure of her hand, a forced smile of adieu, he was gone, letting himself out without even a backward glance in answer to Dottie's cry of recognition. Kate stood within the gate, her eyes so blinded by a mist of unshed tears that she never saw some one crossing the road till a voice said:

"Open the gate, Katie. So you went into the square to have your interview in private! I hope he has ex-

plained— My dear Kittie, you're not crying, are you? Do come in! Some one will be sure to see."

And the tall, slim blonde looked sharply into her sister's tell-tale face, while Dallas, who should have been there to answer for himself, was hurrying down the street, repeating to himself:

"Clive got her the situation! *Clive*, the lawyer, who saw us married! Why didn't he tell me? How comes he to know her? I must see him at once, and find out what he does know. She is not beguiling him, and he me! What a blind, mad, besotted fool he must think me, if that be so!"

When Clive came back from court that day, it was to learn that Mr. M'Kenzie had called twice to see him, and had left his card, on which was scrawled an urgent request that he would call that evening at the Canadian's rooms.

Bernard shook his head.

"Not so," he said. "That man will never let me alone if I give in to his folly, and the end will be, Kate sacrificed, and for what? No, no; she loves him, and he shall marry her—if I can keep him to it, that is. Now to go and see Mrs. Grey."

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE TRUTH AT LAST.

KATE was away from home. Both her hitherto unshaken health and childish high spirits had given way so completely during the last few weeks, that Lady Margaret had taken advantage of the house requiring doing up in preparation for the approaching nuptials, to insist on her accepting an invitation for herself and little Dottie from an old friend who lived at Fulham.

Mrs. Clifton Gore, the friend with whom she was now staying, was the wife of a very clever barrister, one of Bernard Clive's most intimate friends. It was at a ball given at their house in the summer that Dallas had proposed and been accepted; and Mrs. Gore, who was aware of the circumstance, and was a very sweet and happy young wife herself, had felt an increased and thoroughly womanly interest in both lovers ever since. She invited Mr. M'Kenzie to come as well during the latter part of Kate's visit; and she told the young lady so, with a cordial kiss, when she found her standing, with a very pensive face and one hand tightly clasped in Dottie's, at the corner of the terrace where Dallas had told the story of his first love and his last.

They were all enjoying the late warmth and sunshine one afternoon, Mr. Gore and his brother-in-law smoking their cigars on the terrace, with little Jack and Dottie playing with a litter of Newfoundland puppies near them; and Mrs. Gore sitting just inside the French window, near enough to join in the conversation, and with her

baby kicking up its dimpled toes, and crowing with satisfaction, on a cushion at her feet. Kate had been sitting beside her; but Mrs. Gore had sent her into the garden to get some late white roses which grew on a wall near the river walk; and Dallas had followed her.

He was in better spirits to-day than had been the case for some time back—made Kate happy by telling her that he had missed her terribly, and teased her so gaily about her obstinacy in persisting in gathering the roses, thorns and all, for herself instead of letting him do it, that she tossed her pretty head with a saucy smile, and told him that if he must needs be so officious, he could go and get her a pair of garden scissors from the summer-house at the other end of the garden.

He must have been very quick about his errand; for she had barely time to spring up for a cluster of buds, rather too high for her grasp, and to scratch her fingers badly in the effort, when the manly tread was heard again on the gravel behind her; and she turned round laughing, with, "What, back already! Did you make haste that you might see your prediction veri—" and there she stopped abruptly, and blushed scarlet; for the gentleman addressed was not Dallas, but a stranger—a tall, fair young man, painfully consumptive-looking, and with a clerical tie peeping behind the collar of his thick overcoat.

"Mrs. Gore, I presume," he said, lifting his hat, and showing a face strangely suggestive of some one Kate knew, though whom she could not at the moment remember. "I am afraid I am intruding; but I had occasion to call on a guest of yours, Mr. M'Kenzie, on urgent business; and hearing that he was staying here, took the liberty of coming down to see him. The servant told me I should find him by the river; or—"

"He was here a moment ago," said Kate, relieving the visitor's evident embarrassment by her pretty, easy gracefulness. "I am not Mrs. Gore, only a guest of her's; but he has only gone to get something for me. I will call him if you like."

"Oh, thank you; but pray don't trouble. I can wait easily," was the courteous answer; and there was some-

thing in the voice so much more familiar than the face, that Kate could not help exclaiming :

“Ought not I to know you? I fancy—”

“My brother knows the Gores very well,” the visitor broke in. “My name is Clive—Philip Clive. You may have heard him speak of me; but I have only just returned from Canada, and am a stranger here. Indeed, if I had not been the bearer of a death-bed commission to Mr. M’Kenzie—”

“*From Canada!*” repeated Kate. The bright color faded out of her cheeks, leaving them whiter than the roses; and the blossoms fell from her cold, nerveless fingers, with a low rustle, to the ground. She sat down suddenly on the rustic bench beside her, with a feeling as if her knees had suddenly given way, and made a mute gesture that he should do the same.

“Will you wait here?—I—I know your brother,” said the poor little girl, forcing a strange, wan smile. “He is a great friend of ours. Yes, I have heard of you, too,” and a little shiver made the words half inaudible, as she thought with whom connected. “Your voice is just like his.”

“The only likeness between us, I trust,” said Philip, haughtily, the hectic spot deepening in his thin face. “I beg your pardon, but the fact is, Bernard and I have hardly a point in common. At this very moment he is behaving in the most extraordinary way, thwarting me in my efforts to right one who has been most cruelly wronged, actually declining to give me Mr. M’Kenzie’s address—I found it out without him, however—”

“Hush! there he is with Mr. M’Kenzie,” said Kate. “They are at the door of the summer-house. Let us go to them.” There was no surprise or agitation in her tone. She spoke very low, almost in a whisper; and if Philip had looked at her he would have been horrified by the change five minutes had wrought. This white-faced woman, with darkly-lined, pain-laden eyes, was no more like the brilliant, smiling girl he had found among the roses, than if she had been the latter’s wraith.

But he had risen to his feet with a look of fierce anger which swept away all thought of anybody else.

"Bernard *here*!" he exclaimed, vehemently. "So he has tried to be before me, has he? and perhaps to get M'Kenzie out of the way. 'Because the man is going to be married,' forsooth! As if that were any reason he should not take back a calumny which is blighting an innocent life! Excuse me, I must go to them at once. This is a private matter."

"Not from *me*, I think," said Kate, gently. "You are quite right; but—it is I who was going to marry Mr. M'Kenzie; and I will see that you can speak freely to him. Bernard shall not prevent wrong being righted for—for any one's sake;" and before Philip could recover from his conscience-stricken silence, she had led him along the laurestinus-bordered path to the summer-house, at the door of which the two other men were talking too earnestly to notice their approach, and startled them both by her quiet announcement:

"Dallas, here is Mr. Philip Clive. He wishes to speak to you on a matter of importance."

Dallas turned round, flushing violently.

"Kate!"—then turning angrily to Bernard, "you never told me, sir, that your brother was *here*.—Mr. Philip Clive," and he spoke with strongly repressed emotion and bitterness, "I should be glad to see you, but I have just given my word to your brother not to communicate with you on the subject you come about except through him."

"My brother! What has *he* to do with my affairs?" cried Philip; but Bernard checked him, an air of keen disappointment and depression in his tone.

"Nothing. I come too late. Mr. M'Kenzie, I release you from your engagement.—Miss Bellew," going up to her with a look of anxious, kindly earnestness on his face, "these gentlemen are too intent on their Canadian business to have leisure for you and me. Will you let me take you back to the house? I have a message for you from Miss Eve."

He spoke trying to divert her attention; but Kate put an ice-cold little hand in his without looking at him, and said in the same low, strange voice:

"I would rather stay, thank you.—I may, Dallas, may I not? This concerns me as much as you; and it is better we should both hear it from Mr. Philip Clive at the same time."

She did not wait for an answer, but led the way into the summer-house, and sat down. Dallas seemed too irresolute and agitated to reply. He had lost his nerve in the unexpected conjunction of events and people; and Philip's eager determination to speak in contrast to Kate's emotionless quiet seemed to bewilder him. He looked at her as if about to dissent; but then his eyes went back to Philip, who was drawing a bundle of papers from the pocket of his overcoat; and he too sat down on the other side of the roughly-carved little table in the centre, and folded his arms on it. Bernard leaned against the ivy-wreathed pillar with crossed arms and tightened, disapproving lips, and eyes bent on Kate's drooping head.

"I shall not detain you long," Philip said, nervously, fumbling at his papers. "Had I known with whom you were staying—but I promised a dying wretch to finish this duty for him; and as it is a case of foul slander, in which you were made an innocent party—" He stopped to cough, a long, hollow, convulsive cough, which brought a fresh furrow of concern to Bernard's brow. Dallas looked up quickly.

"What slander have I been a party to?" he asked. "I don't understand you."

"You will in a moment. If I were to read all these," touching the papers before him, "it would take too long; and this cough (though it is nothing, really nothing at all) interrupts me; but I have made a summary of them; and you can stop me if you find occasion. To commence with what concerns yourself: you were married on the 11th of April 186—, at S. Louis-sur-Eaux, a village in the province of Three Rivers, to Miss Averil Gertrude Ray, a resident of that place."

"Go on," said M'Kenzie, hoarsely. At the first mention of his marriage his eyes had wandered to Kate; but she neither moved nor looked up, and they came back to the speaker, and never strayed again. Philip had only *paused* for breath. He went on reading.

"Half-an-hour after your wedding you received a letter from a Mr. Milbank, informing you that Miss Ray was already married to the writer; that they had been obliged to separate on account of money matters; but that the lady was not only aware of his existence, but had been corresponding with him till within the last few days. This person also enclosed a certificate which he declared—"

"Was it false then?" M'Kenzie broke in with a vehemence which almost shook the little building; "was this man *not* her husband, and I deceived?"

"Deceived!" repeated Philip, in a voice of bitter scorn; "how could *you* be deceived? you who, day by day, had seen the character of your betrothed open to you as the pages of the Bible—you who, if you did not cast any accusation affecting her honor from you as you would the dirt from your feet, must have sifted it to the very bottom before even offending her ears with it! How could you be deceived, when having, as of course you had, taken this ordinary step, you went to her, and hurled her disgrace in her face, loading her with vituperation and obloquy, and heaping on her every malediction and reproach which a madman (I beg your pardon, a virtuous and injured man!) could find it in his vocabulary to utter—"

"Go on," repeated M'Kenzie, an ominous frown on his brow. "You are a clergyman, I see. Spare sneers which cannot be answered as I would answer them on another man, and—go on. *Was* she married?"

"Of course she was," Philip retorted, with the same contemptuous smile, "and to this Milbank. (You'll find fault with my sneering at *him* perhaps; I can't help that. Clergyman or no clergyman, I must.) When Averil was a girl of nineteen, this man—a young fellow then, and an attorney—was employed in unraveling some speculations in which her father was mixed up. Mr. Ray was a weak man, as innocent as a baby, and as ignorant of business. The speculation was a huge swindle; several people were ruined by it. There was a hue and cry for the promoters, and—he was one of them. Milbank had the papers, knew all about it from the first, and had it in his power

to show the poor old man as innocent of double-dealing as he really was, or denounce him as the cheat circumstances made him appear. What do you think he did? Went to the house where Mr. Ray was lying ill (the shock and agitation having been too much for him), and offered to clear him and his name for a certain price which, in plain terms, he specified."

"Averil's hand! I knew it," Dallas gasped, huskily.

"*Miss Ray's* hand," corrected Philip, a haughty flash in his eyes. "Yes, he asked for that; and it was denied him. He persisted. She told him with her own lips that the only feelings she had for him were the most entire contempt and distrust. Still he persisted; and—well, sir, the father was sick and suffering. He had always liked this Milbank, a handsome, plausible fellow, and he prayed and urged his daughter to consent and save him. His wife, a proud, delicate woman, dreading scandal and shame more than death, and the idol of her daughter's heart, pleaded with Averil to the same tune, until—well, you can guess the end—she was driven desperate and yielded. Mr. Ray's name appeared among the innocent sufferers instead of the guilty promoters of the bubble; and Averil was married to Milbank in the following week. The old people lost most of their money in the crash, sold their house in Montreal, and migrated to a cottage in the suburbs, where, within only two months of the downfall of the swindle, Mr. Ray died. Averil's sacrifice had saved her father's reputation: Averil's sacrifice had not saved her father's life. There is little need to go into what followed. Miss Ray had told this Milbank what were her feelings towards him. She repeated them before going to the altar; and she never changed them. He disbelieved her at first; then he swore to break her pride and punish her; and he married her for that purpose. They lived together for one year, during which (remember, I have all this from his own lips) he lavished on her every insult and injury, down to curses, blows, and worse indignities still. And she bore all uncomplainingly, doing her duty with the silent patience of a martyr, and disdaining her tyrant too much even to reproach him. Fi-

nally, having spent all their money, got into debt, and being on the eve of arrest for some piece of roguery too sharp for the law to overlook, he deserted her without even an adieu. An execution was put into their house almost immediately afterwards, the furniture was sold, and she was left penniless and alone in the world."

Something like a curse broke from Dallas M'Kenzie's lips, and his right hand clenched convulsively; but Philip went on:

"In this strait Averil did what I suppose most young women so situated would have done—went home to her mother, and lived with her for eighteen months in such peace as health injured by all she had gone through, and a continual dread of her husband's reappearance, would permit. At the end of that time, however, this dread was laid to rest, and the shadow which hung over their lives lifted forever. They received news of Mr. Milbank's death."

"His *death*!" cried M'Kenzie. "He was dead then, and she is *my*— But you said you had this from his own lips! For Heaven's sake, go on."

His face was ashy pale, and his hands quivering with agitation. Bernard looked at Kate, for as the words broke from her lover's lips he saw a quick, long shiver run from head to heel through her entire frame.

"He was *not* dead, and I had this from his own lips," said Philip, with a scornful smile, broken by his oft-recurring cough; "but he and a friend of his had got involved in some disgraceful affair which, if discovered, would have transported him for life. The only chance of his escaping was that he should die before the news got wind at headquarters, and he did die accordingly, and in a most skillful manner. Averil first received a penciled scrawl from himself, saying that he was dying, and a few days afterwards a letter from the doctor who had attended him (his friend) telling her of his decease, and enclosing a certificate of the same. He further stated that Milbank had desired his few effects should be sent to his wife, and accordingly these convincing proofs of his decease were duly forwarded to her—a half-worn suit of clothes and some

linen marked by herself; a copy of Walt Whitman's poems, stained with tobacco-juice, and with his name inside; a pipe which had been often puffed in her face, and a note-book with a draft on a Montreal bank for twenty dollars in it. Perhaps this last item was the most conclusive evidence of any (had any more been needed), Japhet Milbank never having been known to let a penny out of his clutches that he could hold on to, and the scoundrel was well aware of it. That draft sealed a lie which ruined his wife's life.

"Her future was determined on the same day which saw the announcement of Milbank's death in the Montreal papers. She and her mother gave up their cottage, dismissed the servants (all but the French maid, who had been with them ever since Mrs. Ray's marriage), and traveled north to S. Louis-sur-Eaux, where she resumed her maiden name and old life. They were very poor, as you know, but to Averil any poverty, so her mother could have been shielded from suffering from it, would have been bliss after all she had gone through; and Mrs. Ray had only one wish left—never to hear the name or be reminded of the man to whom she had sacrificed her child's life. It was the one slur on her own for which she could never forgive herself; and Averil's own horror of the past urged her to blot out the very memory of it to the utmost. Her marriage was never so much as suspected among the people where they had settled. It was a thing unspoken of, and ignored even between themselves.

"Thus they lived three years—three peaceful, quiet years—making few acquaintances, mixing in no society, all in all to each other, and never suspecting that they held a traitor in their midst—a traitor who, but for you, might never have lifted her head to sting. This person was a quadroon woman—you remember her, I see—who came to S. Louis-sur-Eaux shortly after themselves, sought help and employment from them, and was taken into their service as general servant; and she not only knew of Japhet Milbank's existence and whereabouts, but was paid by him to keep him acquainted with every detail of his wife's life. This woman, who for three years had

nothing but a journal of absolute retirement, of matronly reserve, and unfailing kindness to herself to record, was the person who informed him of your arrival in the place within a week of its occurrence; and from that time, through your rapidly-increasing friendship and the mother's illness and death, to your subsequent engagement, was in constant and regular communication with her employer.

"Yes, I am a clergyman," said Philip, with a blaze of indignation in his eyes and voice; "but I can hardly curb my tongue, now, to speak of the devilish malice which could play with its innocent victim as a cat with a mouse, and only deal its death-blow when the pure and generous love, which had never for one moment been his, had not only been bestowed on another, but consecrated to the latter by the blessing of the Church. With his dying lips the wretch told me:

"She always hated me, and looked down on me, and I was determined to bring her where others should hate and look down on her. The plot was carefully laid and easily carried out—almost too easily, for the blind fool she loved knew so little of her as to be convinced of her baseness at the first sight of my letter, and never from beginning to end suspected that she was more deceived than himself.' Yes, Mr. M'Kenzie, you were a useful tool in humbling—"

"Spare me!" broke from M'Kenzie, with a terrible cry—a cry of such sorrow and remorse as thrilled all present. "And she was innocent? She was deceived too? Oh, my Averil—my poor injured love!"

CHAPTER XXXV.

LEFT TO HERSELF.

“**I** *must* see Averil.”

Those had been M'Kenzie's last words as the painful scene came to an end; and they came from him in the desperate tone of one who would brook no denial.

Even his betrothed was forgotten, and he was gone as he spoke, glancing at his watch, and muttering something about catching the train, as he sped through the garden by the shortest route.

When Kate left the summer-house, it was with the stunned and dizzy feeling of one who has just received a blow on the head, heavy enough to crush out all consciousness but pain, but not heavy enough even to dull that. She did not hear Clive's hurried whisper to her lover—a whisper which implored him to remember her presence and his own obligations to her—it was purposely too low for that; and yet the sense that she had been allowed to go out from the midst of them unheeded and unthought of added a fresh pang to the poignancy of the sorrow she was enduring, a fresh proof to the fact she already felt in her inmost being—that her share in the drama was over, her part in the play played out. The fifth act, where all had to be made right, had no place in the cast for her. She might take her seat among the audience and look on, if she would; but no more: nothing else any more.

So she went slowly on through the garden walks, almost stumbling now and then against the shrubs in her

semi-stupefied absorbment, when a hand gently touched her arm, and a voice—Clive's, but wonderfully gentle, too—said :

"Won't you go in by the conservatory, Miss Bellew ? Gore and his brother-in-law are smoking to any extent on the terrace, and I know you can't bear tobacco."

He spoke in a low, rapid tone, stepping forward after a moment's silence to open the conservatory door for her. Kate had not answered, or seemed to hear, and he thought she was going to pass him without speaking, and was doubtful as to whether he had offended her, or only hurt her more ; but on the threshold she paused, lifting a little face as white as a snowflake, and with no light or radiance in the dark eyes to him, as she said very simply and quietly :

"Thank you. You mean to be kind, I know. Thank you, but don't let him come now. I—I can't talk yet."

And then she was gone—disappeared among the scented shrubs and crimson tropical blossoms which made a southern summer of one corner of the house ; and Clive returned to the others with a vision of a pale shadowy face thrown up against a background of green flickering leaves in his mind, with the touch of a cold little hand in his, and a heart aching almost too much for indignation.

Kate did not lie down, or try to sleep, nor did any tears come to relieve her. She sat in her room, with her hands lying limp and white on the lap of her dark dress, and the shawl falling from her shoulders in two straight lines to the ground. The mellow afternoon light reddened into a glorious sunset, all crimsons and violets and pale, pure greens, dashed and streaked with long lines of golden fire, which were reflected in the river's breast, and cast strange flickering lights on Kate's colorless face ; and then that too faded in sober twilight gray ; a cold breeze sprang up from the river, sighing dirge-like among the yellow foliage on the trees, and blowing over the slight young figure which sat there before the open window, still and motionless, with only one feeling in her stunned brain, the first which always comes to a young creature in the newness of a great grief, and says to the

soul, like the tolling of a passing bell, "All is over for you! all is over for you for evermore!"

And Dallas never came the whole evening. No comment was made upon his absence by any one, but Mrs. Gore sent Kate to bed early.

He came next day. Bravely as Kate had endeavored to keep up, going to church in the morning had been too much for her; and her hosts had forbidden her attempting it in the afternoon, and insisted that she should lie down in the library and nurse her headache, which by this time was so ragingly bad that she could hardly force a smile in answer to their kindness. And so it happened that about three o'clock, when Mr. Gore and his brother were gone for a walk, and Mrs. Gore, Dottie, and little Jack were being dressed for afternoon service, Kate was quite alone when there came a ring at the front door, and almost immediately afterwards the footman announced:

"Mr. M'Kenzie."

Kate had been expecting him from moment to moment all day. She knew he *must* come, sooner or later, and she was not lying down, or trying to rest, but simply waiting for him—waiting, and nothing else. Her back was to the light, so that he could not see the change in her face, and her elbow rested on a little table, on which a volume of George Herbert was lying open; but she was not making even a pretense of reading it, though every now and then one line, which formed the refrain all down the page, caught her eye, and smote with a dull reproachful pain on her heart:

"Was ever grief like mine?"

Dallas came into the room slowly, and with a hesitation which was evidently increased by finding Kate alone. He was very pale, and there were signs of strong agitation and disturbance in his face, though he came in smiling, and saying that he hoped his hosts had not been offended by his sudden departure on the day before. There was something he was obliged to do, and it had

not got done in time for him to return to Fulham the same night, or—

"But I hope they will excuse me," he added, with the same constrained smile. "I needn't ask you to do so, Katie. Your kind little heart is too sympathetic to believe I could be intentionally rude or unkind to you. *You* were not angry with me for going away, were you?"

He had got over it very well, and seemed disposed to let the matter rest there; but as he stooped to kiss his betrothed, she drew back her head quickly, and then, as if to atone for the repulse, put her hand in his and said gently:

"Oh, no! I knew you must have a great deal to think of; and, indeed, I had too. But—I am glad you have come now, Dallas, for you—"

"Of course I have come," he put in, huskily. "I would have come earlier if I could. Did you think I should break my engagement?"

There was a double meaning in the question, and Kate understood and accepted it. The color rose a little in her pale face, and her lip quivered, but those twenty-four hours of waiting had schooled her to calm and self-restraint, and she answered, gravely:

"No, Dallas, I knew you would not; but I am going away from here early to-morrow. I have written to mamma already, to tell her so, and I thought that what we had to say to each other was best said and finished here, before we part."

"Finished!" repeated M'Kenzie, the blood rushing into his dark face. "I don't understand you, Kate. I have nothing to say except that I am very sorry you would be present during young Clive's visit yesterday, and that, of course, what you heard makes no difference to us."

"Yes, I thought you would say that," said Kate, softly, "but it does make a difference—a great difference, Dallas, for yesterday you and I were engaged to each other, and now we are only friends, friends as we were at Combe Regis—nothing more."

"Do you mean that you give me up? Nonsense,

Katie, we have had all that out before. Don't begin it over again. I asked you to marry me, and I abide by it. Do you think I shall make you a worse husband because *her* name is purified? Try me, that's all! And understand, I know perfectly well that you love me, and I will not *let* you put me away."

"You will have to do so," said Kate, sadly, and shrinking from the arm which would have drawn her closer. Her very heart seemed breaking, and there were lines of pain round her eyes, but she spoke with a resoluteness quite new to him. "You are true and generous, Dallas, and I am glad, so glad of it; but—you cannot marry me unless I consent, and I will not."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

"RING OUT THE OLD: RING IN THE NEW."

"KATE, there's a letter for you. Make haste!—Mamma is longing for you to open it. It's from Dick."

"Kate, have you got me the book?"

"Oh, Kittie! do come and hear me practice. Tom says, if I'm ready by five, he'll take me out when he comes in from the office."

"Dottie has lost her spelling-book, Kate, so I couldn't teach her for you. I really think you ought to punish her—careless little monkey!"

It was a bright sunny afternoon in May, and Kate stood in the drawing-room doorway of a comfortable, medium-sized house north of the Regent's Park. It looked out in front on the green slope of Primrose Hill, with a view of park palings and tall trees if you stood in an angle of the window; and only sufficient glimpses of houses and chimney-pots to give it life; as bright and cheerful a prospect as could well be found in (unfashionable) London; and though the room within was rather small for the large family inhabiting it, and by no means overtidy, it looked both bright and cheerful too; the old furniture from Gresham Square giving it an air of comfort and dignity which more than made amends for the latter being too large for its present quarters, and somewhat more faded and shabby than when we first made its acquaintance. Folding-doors opened into a smaller and more untidy apartment, yclept the schoolroom, at the back; and out

of this Madge and Dottie had rushed, at the sound of Kate's entrance, to join their voices to that of Eve, who was lying on the sofa in the sunniest corner of the room, with a shawl round her shoulders, and an expression of weariness and petulance settled like a wax mask over her colorless features.

Not kindly did Eve take to the reverse of fortunes which Dick's marriage with Fanny, (for, after having been bought off at great expense, Master Richard had outwitted his mother by marrying Fanny privately, and keeping the fact a secret until the prospects of a family had obliged him to tell Kate, and through her throw himself on his mother's generosity), and a fall in certain stocks in which part of Lady Margaret's money was invested, had entailed on the family of the Bellevs. That it should have occurred just now, when she was growing up, and hoping soon to "come out," and be introduced as her sister had been, was an additional injury to her; and her rickety health and uncertain spirits increased the bitterness of the misfortune. The move from Gresham Square to a house just half the rental had been celebrated by her with floods of tears, ending in a silent gloom, which lasted for weeks; and the determination of Lady Margaret to continue Dick's full allowance until he was able to support himself, his wife and twin babies, had caused the young lady such virtuous anger that she actually wrote off to Lord Lovegoats, disclaiming any encouragement on her part of her brother's misdeeds, and begging not to be counted among the refractory ones of the family. Lord Lovegoats answered the epistle, and the mode in which he did so crushed Eve for some time:

"I have received an impertinent letter from a girl who, while abusing her brother, proves herself to be as like him as possible, by her disrespect for her mother, and the meanness of trying to feather her own nest at her family's expense. Let me assure her that, so far as I am concerned, her attempt is useless, and that I trust it may not be repeated.

LOVEGOATS."

This note was enclosed to Lady Margaret; and it says much for motherly and sisterly love, that she and Kate

kept the secret of it to themselves, and forebore to utter any reproaches when handing it to the conscience-stricken little intriguer; but to admit her to the same confidence as the others was impossible: and Eve's unhappiness was increased by the feeling that she was regarded as a privileged outsider in her own family, and her wants more scrupulously gratified, her coldness and exactions more indulged, because she was not, as it were, one with the rest of the home party.

Three days after the upset of Eve's little *fiasco*, they read an announcement in the *Times*, that a marriage would shortly take place in high life, between Lord Lovegoats and Miss Clarissa Georgina Montpellier, youngest daughter of Captain Montpellier, R. N. Nobody had ever heard of the young lady before; but the news was speedily verified by a second announcement, of the marriage itself. Society lifted up its hands, and wagged more than a nine days' tongue of wonder, at this union between the worn-out old *roué* of seventy-two with a fresh young girl of sixteen; and poor Lady Margaret nearly broke down altogether at this final destruction of all hopes for her children's future. She would have quite done so but for Kate—Kate, who never flagged or gave in for one moment. Her resolution once taken, had been kept both to the spirit and the letter. Although the one who had hitherto been the recipient of most of her uncle's gifts and patronage, she made lighter of their withdrawal than any of the rest; professed to enjoy walking more than riding; declared that, if they had been rolling in wealth, she would not have cared to go to the opera or balls in the year following her unhappy engagement; voluntarily gave up Madame Clarice for a cheaper and less fashionable dressmaker; enlisted Bernard Clive in her service, and, with his aid, took all the trouble of the house-hunting and moving off her mother's shoulders; and herself insisted that she should take Miss Smith's place in the education of Madge and Dottie, so that George might be sent at once to a good school, and Eve not deprived of her Italian and singing masters. It was a brave undertaking, this last, for Madge was nearly fifteen now, a

strong, active, high-spirited girl, hating study, and requiring a good deal of labor and patience from her instructress; but Kate gave both with such hearty good will, that Madge fell too much in love with her to be willfully idle, more especially when she knew that the punishment of misconduct really fell on her elder sister's already overburdened shoulders.

Lady Margaret, while forgiving Dick and reducing her own income for his benefit, had refused to receive or see his wife. She "*could* not countenance that atrocious girl," she said; and Dick *would* not come where Fanny might not; so Kate was made the medium of all communication between them, and was the peacemaker who persuaded her brother that it was only just and natural that their mother should feel indignant at the way in which she had been treated with regard to his marriage; and coaxed Lady Margaret into owning that it was better the young man should not be tempted to leave his work (for he had passed his examination, and received a small provisional appointment in Ireland) for home visits and London distractions; but grow used to domestic duties and the responsibilities he had taken on himself. The birth of the twins and the family misfortunes did seem to have sobered him so far; and Clive, who had run over to Cork to see him in the Easter Holidays, reported that Fanny was really a miracle of economy and management; that she spoke warmly of her husband's kindness and affection; and that the latter had a stronger and more manly air than Clive had ever before seen in him. I'm afraid I must confess that Lady Margaret fairly kissed her friend when he brought her this news; for, after all, the first-born *was* her idol; and both she and Kate strongly suspected that the barrister's "Irish holiday excursion" had been taken wholly and solely to relieve the anxiety which was hanging only too palpably over the harassed mother.

He had taken Tom into his office for the present; for the latter, a spirited lad, very like Kate in face and disposition, had at once given up the prospect of the Church on account of the expenses his college life would be to the

family. He would rather be a clergyman than anything, he said; but he couldn't be that without going to college; and he would rather take a City clerkship than live idly on his mother for a single week. Poor Lady Margaret! The very sound of "City clerkship" for one of her sons made her weep and shiver; but Clive liked the boy's tone, and persuaded him to come into his office for a time, till something permanent could be found for him.

A turmoil of voices in the next room, and the folding-doors were flung open. Eve turned her head sharply, and was about to commence an irritated reproof, when she saw that Kate was among the culprits, and was advancing, waving a letter.

"Hurra, Evey! He's got it. Oh! *aren't* you glad?"

"Who is 'he'? and 'got' what? I thought you had brought me my port wine. You have the keys of the sideboard, I think, Kate, or I would not trouble you."

Eve's "gladness" was of a chilling order, and Madge doubled a pantomimic fist and executed a sort of wrathful prance behind Kate's shoulder.

"Don't be over-anxious for your creature comforts, ma'am," the latter answered, shaking off, with a good-humored laugh, her first impulse of vexation. "Your wine is there, poured out and all, in the schoolroom, so please take it and drink Dick's health; for he has got the appointment he has been trying for—at least he has got the promise of it."

"Oh! *promise!*" said Eve, witheringly.

"It will be vacant in six months from now," pursued Kate, unheeding; "and it's four hundred a-year!"

"Then he won't go on taking two hundred and fifty of ours, I suppose? That is a comfort at least."

"My dear child, you are unreasonable, and forget that Dick is one of us, and as much entitled to a share of what we have as the rest. Papa left everything to mamma for her life, and then to be divided amongst us: two thousand pounds to each of us younger children and the remainder to Dick. He has written himself offering to give up one hundred a year as soon as he is settled at the Cape. I think it is sweet of him, sweet and good! And it is to go to Tom. Dear old patient Tom! I am so glad."

"I really don't see the necessity of being glad at the boys getting everything—*everything!*" said Eve, petulantly; "or why we should live in this vulgar, out-of-the-way place, and never go anywhere, that they may have plenty of money to spend. I believe mamma thinks of nothing and no one but Dick, while we who have behaved properly all our lives—"

There was no use in arguing with Eve, and Kate carried off the other girls to their studies in the schoolroom, while up stairs Lady Margaret was weeping over the projected exile of her first-born, and of the twin grandchildren whom she had never yet seen. It was the best thing that could have happened to Dick. She had lost him, to all intents and purposes, more than a year ago, when he married Fanny Greypole; but this was a reopening of the wound, and the mother's heart bled none the less freely that Dick had written to her also—only a note, but one more loving and contrite than she had ever had from him before.

Some one else was to have a reopening of old wounds before night. When Tom came in he brought Clive with him. They, too, had heard from Dick, and were in such high spirits accordingly that the clatter of tongues and laughter penetrated to the mother's room upstairs, and brought a smile to her sympathetic lips. By-and-by, Kate came running up with a cup of tea, and a look of loving inquiry in her eyes which won a reassuring kiss from Lady Margaret.

"But I won't go down," she said, in answer to Kate's coaxing. "I don't want the children to see I have been fretting; and I shall be all right again by dinner. Are you not going out?"

"Yes," said Kate. "Tom had promised Madge to go for a run in the Park; and Mr. Clive wants me to go too. He says the may is out everywhere, and the perfume too delicious to be wasted. But I would rather stay if I can help you any way, mammy dear."

"You are always helping me. Go out and enjoy yourself with the rest."

"Eve won't go. I asked her; but she has a headache."

"Poor child! Send her up to me. I'm afraid I sometimes neglect her," said Lady Margaret, sighing. "I shall have to send you away on a visit, and make a companion of her instead, for awhile;" and Kate ran away, laughing at the idea.

It was an exquisite afternoon, one of those which, when they *do* come in this country, seem more perfect than anything we get in other lands: the air pure and sweet as a mother's kiss, the sky bluer than any turquoise, the grass greener than any emerald, the whole atmosphere filled and panting with the fragrance of the white and rose-colored may, which strewed the ground with a light snow of scented blossoms as they passed. Madge, the irrepressible, broke off a cluster of pink horse-chestnut blossoms as she dipped under the boughs, for which theft Tom abused her roundly, declaring that he saw a policeman prowling in the vicinity; and making off from her at a pace which obliged her to run after him, the stolen flowers twisted audaciously in the ribbon of her brown hat.

Clive and Kate followed more soberly. The latter's gaiety generally died out of her face as soon as she left the hall door; but to-day it looked more thoughtfully grave than usual; and Clive noticed it.

"You are tired," he said, sharply. "What have you been doing with yourself?"

"Nothing in particular; and I am not tired," and she looked up smilingly. "I was only thinking—"

"Does thinking make you look sad? You seemed so gay a moment back."

"Oh! I am always gay at home," said Kate, simply. "They would think everything was going wrong if I were not; so that is of course; but one must have serious things to think of sometimes; and you—we are such old friends now—you don't want me to be always laughing, do you?"

"I don't want you ever to laugh unless you feel merry. I should like that to be always."

"And yet you used to scold me for not being graver!"

"I used to do a great many impertinent things. I hoped you had forgotten them."

"I shouldn't like to forget anything you have ever done for us; but I don't remember the impertinence."

"Hum! That is a young lady's speech to be received, if not believed. Tell me (to change the subject) what serious thing you were thinking of when you looked so sober awhile ago."

"I'm afraid you would think *me* impertinent if I were to tell you."

"You are not afraid of any such thing. Since when did you begin to tell fibs?"

"Since you left off aggravating me into the truth! If you *will* have it, I was wondering why you only read me a bit of Dick's letter to you instead of giving it me to read as you usually do. There!" and Kate blushed up till she paled the rosy-tinted may at the confession. Clive smiled rather peculiarly.

"Do you really want to know? Well, it was simply because he spoke of you in it."

"Of *me*?" looking up, wonderingly. "Why, what about me?"

"Excuse me that—"

"Oh! I beg your pardon. I only thought that perhaps there was something I could do for him—poor dear boy!—and that he did not like to ask me himself."

"You thought right. That was just it."

"And won't you tell me what it is?"

"No, it would be no use. You couldn't do it under any circumstances. I have heard you say so; and it would only pain you to refuse."

Kate looked troubled. Poor child! she had had so much pain of late that she had grown cowardly of invoking more. Clive was their truest friend. He knew all their affairs. If she *could* not do this, it was better, as he said, not to tell her of it.

"You know best," she answered, gently. "I don't need to tell you what I would do for him. The difficulty is to know what I would *not* do. But I was troubled about something else—Eve."

"Ah!" said Clive, comprehendingly.

"She is not happy; and I *can't* make her so."

"Nor ever will unless you treat her properly."

"Mr. Clive!" in a very hurt tone.

"Yes, Miss Bellew, unless you leave off waiting on and sparing and spoiling her as if she were a visitor, instead of treating her as you treat yourself and Madge, as one of the family to bear her burden with the rest, and take her share of the knocks and hard places."

"But we are so much stronger, and don't mind it. You forget how delicate she is. As things are, she feels the change more than any of us."

"She would feel it less if she had more to do for others, and less time to think about herself. You are ruining her as you did Dick, withering up her heart and faculties by giving them nothing but herself to feed on. She feels it herself."

"She does not like doing things," pleaded Kate, meekly.

"She likes still less feeling that everything is done by *you*. What account is she in her own family? None. Who comes to her for help and sympathy? No one. And whose is the fault? Yours, who slave for everybody and are loved by everybody. Of course she is not happy. Should you be in her place?"

"I—don't know," said Kate, doubtfully. "At least I think I do. Mr. Clive, I don't like you. You are like a dose of medicine, very wholesome perhaps, but not nice to swallow. In this case, I think you may be right, but one can't make a change now. I *couldn't* sit idle and make her work; and, besides, you practice the very opposite of your own preaching. You are making yourself a perfect tutor to Tom at present—giving him up nearly all your evenings. He says so himself, and it is very true, but you ought not to do it."

"Miss Bellew, the case is not in point. My sister is so lively and sociable—except when I am with your family—that I find a companion very agreeable. Be quite assured that if I didn't I shouldn't ask him to come. My sister rubs them up." "I am put down and silenced,"

laughed Kate, not in a very injured tone. "I am quite used to that, from you; but—"

She stopped short; and he, looking at her, saw the color fade all at once and utterly out of her face, and her lovely eyes widen with a strange, half wistful, half pathetic expression. They had come into one of the more public parts of the Park, and were just about to cross the road. Tom and Madge were already on the further side; but an open carriage came by at the moment, bowling rapidly along, and the other two drew back. There were two people in it—a well-built, middle-aged, handsome man, and a woman fair as a lily and beautiful as a goddess. Her face was turned from them as she spoke to her companion, and he looked at and noticed nothing but her. The sunlight laughed and flashed on the golden hair which contrasted so wonderfully with her violet velvet and costly laces; on the loving absorption in his eyes; on the magnificent pair of chestnuts which were bearing them onward—laughed and flashed for one moment, and then—carriage and occupants were gone in the distance, and there was only a cloud of dust where they had passed, and Kate trudging through it with a heightened color and very sober lips. Clive's face had altered too, and his voice was hoarse with anger.

"Abominable behavior! Driving over people in that headlong, harum-scarum manner! Confound it! Good mind to write to the *Times*."

"Only they didn't drive over *us*," said Kate, soothingly, though her voice was a trifle unsteady. "We should even have had time to cross if we had liked."

A short, contemptuous grunt, more expressive than words.

"Do not!" she said, laying her hand with a quick, womanly impulse on his arm. "I am content. Why should not others be? You are more concerned for me than I am for myself."

There are times in which a woman's touch, however light—a woman's voice, however sweet—are too much for man's endurance. This was one of them. He turned *on her* as sharply as if he had been struck.

"Very likely. I love you better than anything in this world, and you—you don't even think of yourself!"

A dead silence. The sun is sinking lower and lower, a globe of fire behind the farthest fringe of trees in the west. Two long black shadows stretch and creep before two people's feet over the gold-green grass. The children are laughing in the distance. The perfume of the mayflowers fluctuates in little puffs upon the languid breeze. Then a bell rings out from some distant church, and there is a black whirr of rooks from the copse hard by. Kate's eyes are on the grass, on the longest shadow in her path. The crimson glory in the sky is reflected on her cheeks.

"You—you do not mean that," she says at last, very low.

"Don't I?" with curt indignation. "Perhaps not. I thought I generally meant what I said."

"I—I was sure you had got over it—forgotten it long ago."

"You thought you had given me a sufficiently decided answer to make me do so. So you had. Don't make yourself uneasy. It's the child's own fault if he *will* go on crying for the moon when he is told it's out of his reach."

Still speaking to the shadow, Kate says, remonstratingly:

"I am not the moon."

"You are to me. Oh, I know I am an insane fool for speaking to you. I know I never had any chance, and meeting that—that *fellow* to-day has only reminded me of the absurdity of ever hoping or trying to—"

He breaks off with a quiver of pain in his voice. Kate's eyes fill with slow great drops, which make the tall shadow swim before them.

"You—could not wish to marry a girl who was—was going to be married to another man only seven months ago," she says, brokenly, the scarlet deeper in her downcast face, "it would not be right for you or—"

"Kate, for pity's sake don't talk to me in that way! It is not your having been going to marry him seven months or seven days ago. It is that you love him now, and—"

"That is not true"—lifting her head with a sudden flash in her eyes. "I did once—dearly, when I thought he loved me; but now—how can you think it? Have you forgotten that he is married? I am glad that it is so, glad that he is happy, but that is all."

"Are you sure?" Clive asks, earnestly. "Kate, stop one moment and look at me. Do you remember that morning on the beach?"

She does not look at him. She looks at the shadow again, and answers:

"Yes."

"You told me that even if he had not existed, you could never have liked me, that you would rather be an old maid than marry me or—"

"I did not know you then," Kates breaks in hurriedly, and with woeful shame and contrition. "Mr. Clive, *don't* be ungenerous! You know how sorry I have been—and when you have been so good to me ever since—I thought you had forgiven!"

"Do you mean," taking her two hands in his, and almost crushing them in his intense earnestness, "that if I were coming to you now—he being put aside as not existing—you—would answer me differently?"

With tearful eyes, disobediently fixed on the grass, and pouting lips, Miss Bellew answers in a sob:

"I am not as—as ungrateful as a—hedgehog!"

"I know you are not. You are painfully, *frightfully* grateful. I almost believe at this moment that you would marry *me* from gratitude; and I—I tell you plainly—I would not accept the sacrifice. I am content, if you will have it so, to be your good friend and a bachelor till death; and never trouble you again, by word or look, for what you can't give; but I wouldn't marry even you, unless you loved me."

Tom and Madge are becoming audible in dispute over a wager. Their well-developed voices raised to something above concert pitch, drown an indistinct humble from a young lady whose right hand (she has succeeded in freeing the left) is gradually getting numb and crushed. Clive only catches a fragment—something about "so

soon;" but the change in his hard, plain face, is like the sunlight of God upon a rugged hill-side.

"Katie, child," he says, his voice breaking with infinite tenderness, "do you mean you will—*try*?"

Two tall, lithe-limbed young people burst through the hawthorn thicket, and career to them with loud-lunged vociferations, as to who was the stroke of the L. R. C.'s boat at Henley this year. Two shadows, which have gradually merged into one, suddenly separate to opposite sides of the path. Clive answers with prompt vivacity:

"Benson, of Gray's Inn, of course. Who else?"

Kate does not answer at all. Perhaps she differs. Her face (what can be seen of it, at least) has a somewhat vague expression.

"Oh dear! I was certain it was a Mr. Maitland," says Madge, crestfallen. Madge is always certain she is right, and always certain to be wrong; but Bernard Clive is a law from which even she seeks no appeal.

"Why, Katie," she goes on, surveying her sister, "how hot and tired you look! Hadn't we better go home? It must be past six."

"Poor old girl, she does look done!" adds Tom, with a paternal pat on his elder sister's shoulder. "Been on your feet all day, as usual, I suppose, Kittie. Here, lay hold of my arm. What's the good of a brother?"

But Clive interposes—Clive, who is looking at her anxiously, and making an inward resolve that his wife, if he ever has one, shall not stand on her feet all day, while his can save her.

"Won't you take my arm, Katie?" he says, very quietly, "I think it will help you better at present;" and Katie understands, and turning, lays her pretty fingers on the strong support offered. It is the lightest pressure possible; and yet—oh! my friends, you who have been young once, and have loved and been loved, can you guess how keen and warm a thrill it sends tingling through two hearts? For pretty Miss Bellew has laid down her arms at last, and her enemy has become at once her conqueror and her slave. Little wonder that the walk home is a very silent one, or that Tom and Madge vote their elders

growing frightfully middle-aged and stupid. "But they never did like each other," Madge says. "We oughtn't to have left them to walk together, Tom."

THE END.



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